



Pennington SWCD

July 2021

KEEPING YOUR RECORDS STRAIGHT



Photos by Greg Hilgeman

In this issue

- ◆ Feedlot Record Keeping
- ◆ MAWQCP Opportunities
- ◆ Don't Dump That Bait!
- ◆ Name That Weed
- ◆ It All Started With An Acorn (Part II)
- ◆ Shoreland and Septic Permits

All feedlot owners who apply manure to land must maintain proper setbacks from sensitive features, follow maximum nutrient rates, and prevent pollution of waters. Feedlots that maintain 100 animal units (AU) or more have additional requirements for record keeping and documentation.

- ◆ Feedlots that store manure from **100 AU or more** must test manure for nitrogen and phosphorus every four years. These sites must keep land application records that include manure analysis results, field and crop information, date and rate of application, and nitrogen application information. Records must be kept for the most recent 3 years, except in special protection areas, where records must be kept for the most recent 6 years.
- ◆ Feedlots that store manure from **300 AU or more** must test manure for nitrogen and phosphorus every four years and test soils for phosphorus every four years. In addition to the requirements for 100 AU records, these sites must keep land application records with soil testing and phosphorus application information. If manure is applied by someone who is not a certified animal waste technician, a manure management plan (MMP) is required. A MMP is a detailed plan that includes information from the record keeping sheets with additional details. This allows you to plan where manure can be spread without over applying and risking nutrient runoff.

These documents are required by Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 7020.2225 and are important to keep up to date. If your feedlot is inspected, your land application records, manure test results, and/or soil test results must be provided for review, if applicable. You can find these record keeping sheets on the MPCA Feedlot webpage. If you are unsure of what documentation your feedlot is required to maintain, please contact the county feedlot officer at (218) 683-7075 or Bryanna.Grefthen@Pennington.mnswcd.org.



"The MPCA is a sponsoring agency with a grant supporting a portion of the delegated Pennington County Feedlot Program."

PENNINGTON SWCD

Serving Pennington County
Since 1948

Office Hours

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. M-TH

7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. F

Mission Statement

Provide landowners with
technical assistance in
identifying and improving
resource issues.

Board of Supervisors

Ricky Peterson

Linda Hanson

Greg Hilgeman

ADawn Nelson

Kevin Wilde

Board meetings are held the
third Thursday of every
month at 9:00 a.m.

District Staff

Peter Nelson

District Manager

Barb Molskness.....

District Coordinator

Larissa Fitzgerald.....

District Technician

Bryanna Grefthen.....

Water Resource Spec.

Matt Sorvig

Resource Technician

Donna Christianson.....

Outreach Coordinator

Jill Fejszes

Farm Bill Biologist

Assisted by NRCS

Nico Bennett.....

District Conservationist

Assisted by RRVCSA

Zach Foley

Engineering Technician

**An Equal Opportunity
Provider and Employer**

Meet Our Newly Appointed Supervisor Kevin Wilde



Hello, my name is Kevin Wilde. I grew up on a farm in eastern Pennington County and graduated from Lincoln High School in 1997. In 2007, I purchased my grandparents' farm in Kratka Township. I have a cow/calf operation and raise small grains.

In my spare time, I enjoy hunting, fishing, and being a goofy uncle to my nephew. I am very interested in conservation and look forward to serving on the Pennington SWCD Board of Supervisors.



Say Hello To Our New District Technician Larissa Fitzgerald

Hello, all! My name is Larissa Fitzgerald. I grew up and went to school here in Thief River Falls. I graduated, as a bit of a late bloomer, from the University of Minnesota Crookston with a degree in Natural Resources – Wildlife Management after finally figuring out what I wanted to be when I grew up at nearly 30.

I just recently moved back to Thief River Falls from North Carolina with my daughter and our two dogs. Prior to accepting this position, I worked as a Wildlife Biologist at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, dealing with endangered species and wetlands.

In my free time I enjoy drinking good coffee, reading, gardening, snuggling my pups, belting out Disney songs with my daughter, and just being outside. I'm looking forward to this exciting new adventure with the Pennington SWCD!



Press release by Minnesota Department of Agriculture

New Study Highlights Higher Profits for Ag Water Quality Certified Farms

Farmers also saw other improved financial metrics

St. Paul, MN: A new study by the Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence shows that farmers enrolled in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) had higher profits than non-certified farms. This marks the second year of data highlighting improved financial outcomes.

The “Influence of Intensified Environmental Practices on Farm Profitability” study examined financial and crop production information from farmers enrolled in the Minnesota State Farm Business Management education program. The 64 MAWQCP farms in the study saw 2020 profits that were an average of \$40,000 or 18% higher (median of \$11,000) than non-certified farms. The 2019 data showed an average of \$19,000 or 20% in higher profits (median of \$7,000) for certified producers. Other key financial metrics are also better for those enrolled in the MAWQCP, such as debt-to-asset ratios and operating expense ratios.

The two years of data serve as an early indicator of a positive return on investment for whole-farm conservation management farmers implement in order to become certified.

“The Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program is a double-win for the state,” said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. “We see that certified farms have a major impact on our environment for the better; now we also know that those farmers see better economic outlooks which helps our ag economy. I encourage all farmers and landowners to look into the advantages of certifying their land.”

“While this study is in its infancy, capturing two years of data and 3% of the Minnesota database, it does look encouraging that producers who are water quality certified enjoy an increase in farm profitability,” said Keith Olander, Executive Director of AgCentric. “As we expand this dataset in future years, we will look to incorporate enterprise level management data that may explain more about what is driving these profit levels.”

To view, download, or request a copy of this report, visit agcentric.org.

MAWQCP



Northwestern Minnesota Area Certification Specialist, Glen Kajewski, and Pennington SWCD staff are working with producers to identify water quality risks present on their farm and provide options to alleviate them.

Through the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), producers are offered the opportunity to obtain technical and financial assistance to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) that promote water quality. Some of these practices include side water inlets, field borders, cover crops, minimal tillage, and more.

Certification provides 10 years of regulatory compliance certainty with any new water quality rules or laws. Producers can also use their certification to promote their farm as protective of water quality.

Pennington SWCD is proud to have 17 applications and 15 certified producers in the MAWQCP. Producers range from livestock operators to crop farmers. Thank you all for your leadership in implementing conservation practices that protect our water!

If you are interested in learning more about the MAWQCP, please stop by the SWCD office or call (218) 683-7075.



DON'T DUMP THE BAIT!

Imagine taking the boat out of the water after a successful day of fishing. Remove the drain plug, clean off aquatic plants, drain all the water, and use the available tools to clean the boat. You took precautions to reduce the risk of spreading aquatic invasive species. Now, you don't want the minnows you paid for to go to waste, so you release them into the lake. Many anglers make that same mistake. **Releasing live bait (minnows, leeches, and worms) into a waterbody is illegal.** Since 2011, there has been a law in effect prohibiting the release of live bait in a body of water.

A few options exist for anglers to properly dispose of live bait instead of releasing them into the water. If you no longer want your bait, dispose of them in the trash or a designated bait disposal area. If you wish to keep your live bait for your next fishing trip, bring a bottle of tap water with and leave it in your vehicle. When you are ready to leave the lake, dump out the lake water in your bait bucket (remember it is illegal to transport waters of the state) and replace with the tap water. Remember, anytime you move into a different body of water, be sure to empty the lake water from your bait pail when you leave each site to reduce the chance of accidentally spreading aquatic invasive species!



INTRODUCING...

Patrice Delaney Pennington SWCD Summer Intern

Hello! My name is Patrice Delaney. I recently graduated from Minnesota State University Moorhead where I studied Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, along with Scientific Illustration. I have spent two years doing research on prairie restorations, and recently illustrated a plant guide for future student researchers.

I now live in TRF with my cat, Hoodcat. I enjoy exploring the outdoors and diverse ecosystems.

I am excited to be a member of the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa and look forward to working with the SWCD staff this summer.












Name That Weed

A Minnesota Department of Agriculture grant was received to inventory and prioritize management of noxious weeds in the county. The Pennington Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) will use the inventory to identify priority species and locations. Interested agencies, groups, or individuals are welcome and encouraged to join the Pennington CWMA to provide input or receive advice about noxious weed identification and control methods. Some invasive plants can be mistaken for native look-a-likes. Please be sure to correctly identify them prior to treatment. For more information on noxious weeds or to report noxious plants to the inventory, visit the Pennington SWCD website or call the office at (218) 683-7075.

CHALLENGE: Identify the noxious plants in the photos below we want to keep out of Pennington County.
(Answers at the bottom of the page.)

"Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant"

<p>1.  MN Dept of Ag</p>	<p>2.  SWCD</p>	<p>3.  SWCD</p>
<p>4.  MN Dept of Ag</p>	<p>5.  MN Dept of Ag</p>	<p>6.  MN Dept of Ag</p>
<p>7.  MN DNR</p>	<p>8.  MN DNR</p>	<p>9.  MN Dept of Ag</p>

Answers: 1. spotted knapweed 2. common tansy 3. European buckhorn 4. leafy spurge
5. Canada thistle 6. purple loosestrife 7. crown vetch 8. wild parsnip 9. Palmer amaranth

It All Started With An Acorn

"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn."

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Emerson's quote was taken to heart by the late Dorothy Hanson, former kindergarten teacher at Northrup School. Each fall, Dorothy planted acorns in her classroom so students could help nurture and witness a "mighty oak in the making."

Every spring, Dorothy would purchase SWCD trees. Former District Technician, Gary Lane, was curious about her annual purchase. After a few questions, he discovered she was giving them to her students and admired her idea. Gary asked the SWCD board to provide the trees free of charge. The board went one step further and donated trees to ALL kindergarten students in the county; thus, the beginning of the SWCD Arbor Day Program. Every year since then, our staff has made kindergarten classroom visits and distributed trees.

The story doesn't end there. Dorothy passed away in 2005. At Dorothy's funeral visitation, her daughter Katherine learned the SWCD was still donating trees to kindergartners. Later that year, Katherine contacted the SWCD regarding her desire to pay for future trees in her mom's honor. The paperwork was completed to establish a fund, and the next spring Katherine accompanied Barb Molskness to the classrooms. They also helped plant a tree at Challenger Elementary School in Dorothy's memory.

Over the years, thousands of trees have been distributed to kindergarten students in Pennington County. Some have grown to be special additions in beautiful yards. **Just think...this all began with a teacher planting an acorn!**

Reprint of article from Pennington SWCD Newsletter dated June 2020.

It All Started With An Acorn (Part II)



Dorothy Hanson

Did your child receive a tree in kindergarten? If so, you may be interested in some history. The Pennington SWCD has been providing trees to kindergarten students since 1979. Dorothy Hanson, former kindergarten teacher at Northrup School, was the reason we began giving out trees, and her daughter Katherine is assuring we continue the tradition. Katherine has been funding this project for several years to honor her mother who used to plant acorns in her classroom and teach her students about the mighty oak. She also purchased trees from the SWCD in the spring for each of her students to plant.

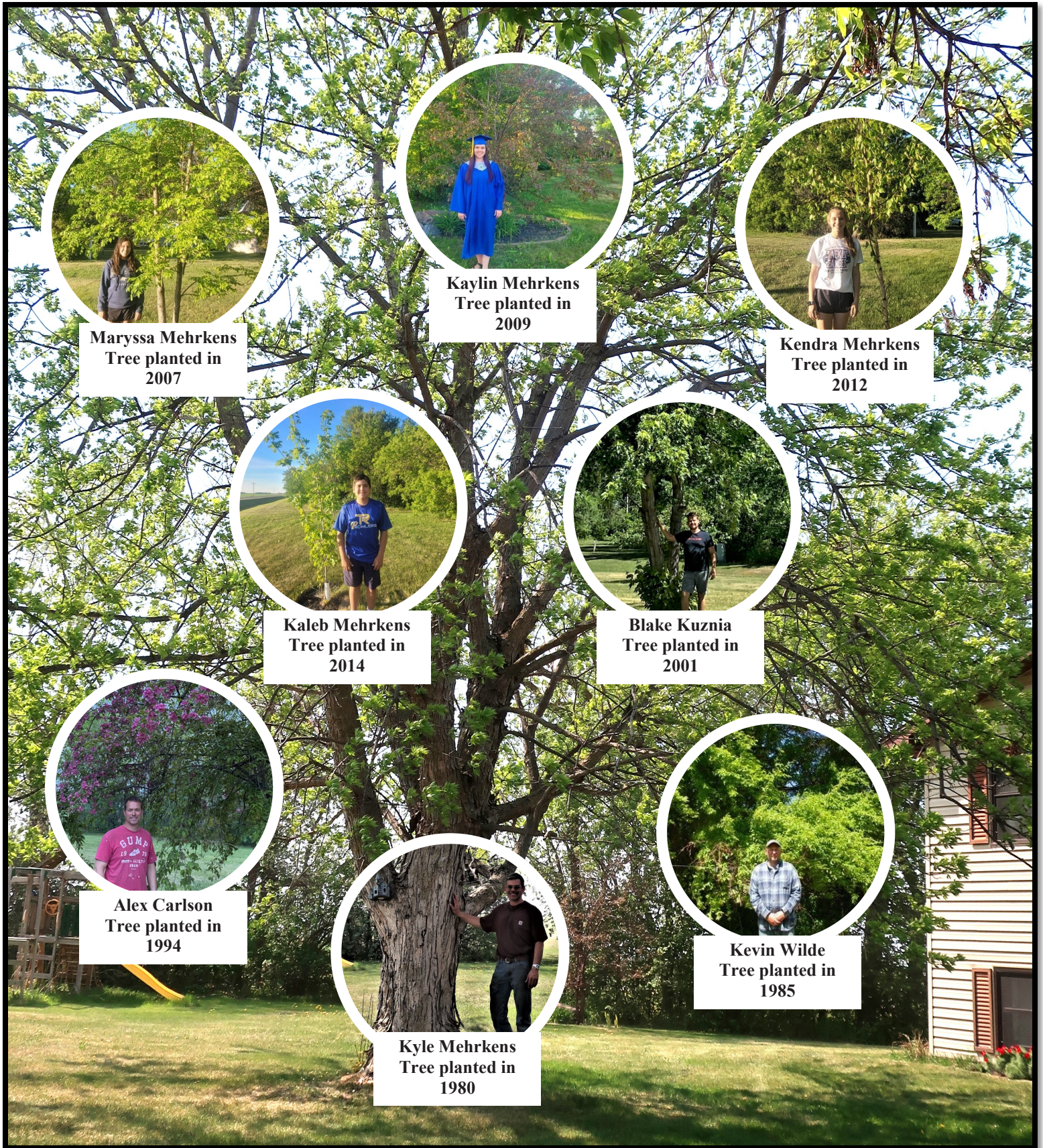


Thank you, Katherine, for carrying on your mother's legacy.

Recently, the SWCD was fortunate to have a visit from Katherine Hanson. We made a field trip to Kyle and Misty Mehrken's farm. Besides having all their children's trees, Kyle has his own kindergarten tree that he received from Dorothy Hanson while attending Northrup School. The Silver Maple has a prominent place in their yard, providing shade for their home. Kyle shared the story about their dog digging up his freshly planted tree. His parents retrieved and replanted the tree, and today it is a beauty!

It is estimated that since its inception, the SWCD has given out over 7,000 trees. Varieties included flowering crab, silver maple, birch, ash, spruce, and several others. Each year, SWCD staff visit the classrooms discussing why trees are important. The kids are excited to learn and bring home their very own tree. They are always encouraged to have pictures taken with their tree throughout the years from planting to graduation.

Students have been enjoying their trees for over four decades. We are forever grateful to Dorothy Hanson and her daughter Katherine for the gift of trees.



Maryssa Mehrkens
Tree planted in
2007

Kaylin Mehrkens
Tree planted in
2009

Kendra Mehrkens
Tree planted in
2012

Kaleb Mehrkens
Tree planted in
2014

Blake Kuznia
Tree planted in
2001

Alex Carlson
Tree planted in
1994

Kevin Wilde
Tree planted in
1985

Kyle Mehrkens
Tree planted in
1980

***Dorothy's Dream Is Still Alive And
Flourishing After Four Decades***

CONSERVATION EDUCATION



Arbor Day 2021

Arbor Day trees were given out to the kindergarten and first grade classes at Challenger Elementary, St. John's, St. Bernard's, and Goodridge Schools this year as the pandemic kept us from distributing trees in 2020.



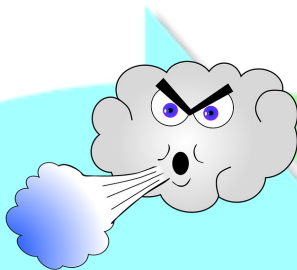
To our sponsors:

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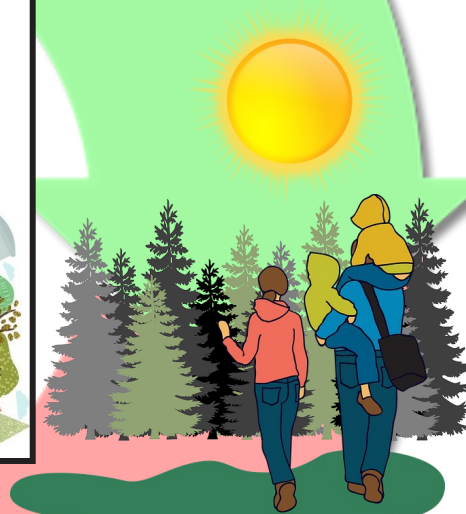
2021 POSTER CONTEST WINNERS



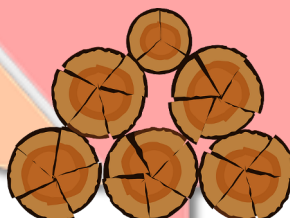
Taylor Wilson - Goodridge



Korah Merrill - Goodridge



Ellie Nelson - Goodridge



Norah Phelps - Goodridge

PERMITS

REQUIREMENTS

Shoreland

Streambanks must tolerate strong currents, changing water levels, ice jams, flooding, and surface water runoff. Bank and soil erosion is natural and sometimes inevitable, but can be increased by human activity including shoreland development.

The Pennington County Shoreland Ordinance regulates building and land alteration within 300 feet of Public Waters. Minimum structure setbacks protect not only the structures, but the streambank as well. The minimum setback for structures is 100 feet, but there are some exceptions in the ordinance.

The shoreland permit fee is \$25.

Septic System

The Pennington County Sewage and Wastewater Treatment Ordinance also requires permits for any new or replacement septic system within the county.

Landowners must work with a licensed designer to determine what type of system is needed. The type of system depends on the soils and depth of the seasonally saturated soil, which is determined by the designer and SWCD staff.

The septic system permit fee is \$100. A \$75 discount is offered if the landowner watches an educational video on the operation and maintenance of septic systems.

If you are planning to build a structure near a river, in the floodplain, or looking to install or replace a septic system, contact the SWCD to get started on the permit application process.

Well Water Testing



Groundwater is the primary source of drinking water for many residents in Pennington County. Do you know when the last time your well water was tested? Our annual well water testing clinic tests private wells for nitrates, E. coli, and total coliform bacteria at a discounted rate of \$12 per sample. Homeowners can pick up a sample bottle with instructions during the 3-day clinic held in late August. Samples must be collected and returned to the SWCD the same day. This year's dates have not been set, but watch for flyers and advertisements in the local papers.

We do offer kits year-round as well. RMB Labs in Detroit Lakes tests private well water and provides a no cost courier service. Participants can obtain a kit, collect their sample, and simply drop it off at our office. Test kits come with a bottle and instructions on how to take the sample. The cost varies depending on the analysis chosen. Samples are picked up Monday through Thursday by 2:00 p.m.

Cost-Share Programs

EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that helps make conservation work for you. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will help you invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while also improving your agricultural operation.

Through EQIP, NRCS provides you with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement improvements, or what we call conservation practices.

Producers interested in applying for EQIP should submit an application to their local NRCS field office. NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis throughout the year.

NRCS sets aside 10 percent of EQIP funding for historically underserved customers, which include beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, limited resource producers, Tribal farmers, and veterans. These customers receive a higher EQIP payment rate on their conservation practices.

To apply, contact the Thief River Falls NRCS office at (218) 681-1612 x3 for an appointment.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

CSP

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) offers an opportunity for crop growers to enhance their agricultural operations while adopting conservation activities that reduce energy use, improve soil health, and improve water quality. CSP can help you plan and implement conservation practices and enhancements that address natural resource concerns on your operation.

CSP helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation. Whether you are looking to improve water efficiency, increase crop yields, or develop wildlife habitat, we can custom design a CSP plan to help you meet those goals. We can help you schedule timely planting of cover crops, develop a residue management plan to improve soil health, implement no-till to reduce erosion or manage riparian areas in a way that benefits wildlife habitat. If you are already taking steps to improve the condition of the land, chances are CSP can help you find new ways to meet your goals. CSP contracts last for five years, with the option to renew for an additional five years.

If you have any questions or would like to fill out an application, please contact your local NRCS office at (218) 681-1612 x3.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

CRP

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) pays landowners to temporarily retire cropland. Land is enrolled in 10-15-year contracts and planted into grasses or trees to create wildlife habitat and reduce sedimentation. Landowners receive a yearly payment for maintaining cover.

CRP can be a great choice for land that may be difficult to farm or land for hunting. Some of the options for CRP include food plots, pollinator habitat, prairie strips, tree planting, and whole field practices such as wetland restoration, native grasses, and introduced grasses.

Key dates for CRP this year are July 23rd for enrolling in the general signup and August 6th for enrolling in the continuous signup.

If you want to learn more about what CRP options might be a good fit for your land, contact Jill at the Pennington SWCD.

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**PENNINGTON SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**
201 Sherwood Ave S, Suite 3
Thief River Falls, MN 56701-3400

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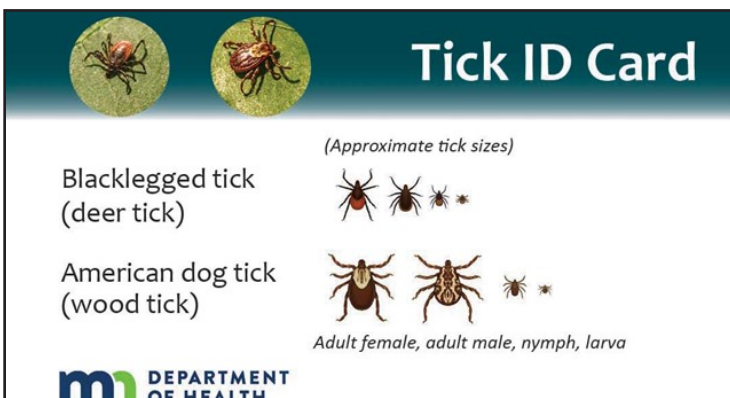


TICK CHECK!!

There are two tick species commonly found in Pennington County: The American dog tick, or wood tick, and the blacklegged tick, also known as the deer tick. Wood ticks are dark brown with whitish markings. Deer ticks are reddish brown in color and much smaller than wood ticks.

While not all individual ticks are disease carriers, both common tick species are known to carry diseases that can infect both humans and pets. The most common tickborne disease, Lyme disease, is carried by the deer tick.

Ticks are most likely to crawl onto you or your pets while walking through long grass and brush, so it's best to stick to the trail. The easiest way to protect against ticks and their bites while out in the woods or field is by using repellents such as picaridin, DEET, or permethrin.



"Appears courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Health"

Check out our website at: www.penningtonswcd.org