



## POPE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Conservation News

*Photo Credit: David Jungst*

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## NITRATE TESTING CLINIC AT THE FAIR

Pope Soil and Water Conservation District (Pope SWCD) will hold a free water testing clinic Friday, August 7th at the Pope County Fair. Bring your water sample for free nitrate testing to the Pope SWCD booth in the Industrial Building at the fairgrounds between 12:00 pm and 4:00 pm. To collect a water sample and receive the best results, let tap run for 1 minute, use a clean jar or plastic bag to collect the sample ( 1 cup is all that is required), and keep the sample cold. Water should be tested within 2 hours after collection.



The Minnesota Department of Health recommends that private wells should be tested for nitrates every 2-3 years or more often if nitrates have been previously detected. If an infant under the age of 6 months will be consuming the water, the well water should be tested before allowing the infant to consume the water. Boiling water is not recommended as this will only concentrate the nitrate level. The current acceptable health level for nitrate in drinking water is 10 milligrams per liter.

It is often difficult to pinpoint where the nitrate in drinking water comes from because there are so many possibilities. The source of nitrate and nitrogen may be from runoff or seepage from fertilized soil, municipal or industrial wastewater, landfills, animal feed lots, septic systems, urban drainage, or decaying plant material.

The mission of Pope Soil & Water Conservation District is to promote, guide, and provide high quality technical assistance for Pope County and for the enhancement and protection of land and water resources through implementation projects that will lead toward effective conservation of soil and water. Providing a free water testing clinic, is one of the many services provided by

## COME VISIT OUR BOOTH AT THE FAIR

Pope SWCD will have a fair booth at the Pope County Fair in the Industrial Building Wednesday through Saturday. We encourage you to stop on by to learn about the conservation work that is happening. We will have staff available to visit with you about programs and projects.



## STAFFING CHANGES

Pope SWCD is saying farwell and best wishes to Britta Haseman, Farmbill Technician. She has taken a position in Stevens County with the NRCS as their Soil Conservationist. Her last day will be August 21, 2015. The SWCD has a position posted which will close on August 7th. Visit our website for details at [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org).

David Jungst, Ducks Unlimited Biologist finished his position at the Pope Service Center at the end of June. Changes were made to regional work areas and our assistance is now coming from Matt Rose with Ducks Unlimited and he is housed in Stevens County. The local office is still your point for program questions.

## POPE SWCD PROVIDES BUFFER UPDATE

In June of this year, Governor Dayton signed into law a new buffer initiative aimed at enhancing protection of Minnesota's waters.

The buffer initiative will help protect the state's water resources from erosion and runoff pollution by establishing roughly 110,000 acres of buffer along waterways.

The new law generated a significant amount of interest, and landowners likely have many questions about how it will impact their property. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, which will oversee the process, is working to get program details underway. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is beginning to create the buffer protection maps that will determine what waters are subject to the new law.

Completion of those maps is expected by July 2016.

Landowners may install buffers on their own at any time, or can wait until those maps are complete in 2016. The new law specifies November 2017 as the deadline for establishment of 50-foot wide buffers on public waters and November 2018 for 16.5-foot wide buffers on public drainage systems.

"Pope SWCD is ready to provide technical assistance to any county resident looking to install conservation practices on their land," Holly Kovarik said. "We can help walk you through the process, apply for funding, and be an ongoing resource for establishing

buffers and other conservation practices."

For more information about the Governor's buffer law, please visit: [http://](http://bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/)

[bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/](http://bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers/).

For more information about Pope SWCD, please visit the website at: [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org).

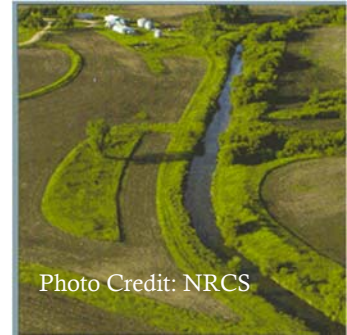


Photo Credit: NRCS

## MINNESOTA'S BUFFER LAW

*ARTICLE CREDIT: STEARNS SWCD*

What landowners need to know regarding the recent legislation.

- The Department of Natural Resources will map all public waters and ditches that will be subject to buffers by July 2016.
- 50 foot buffers must be installed on public waters by November 2017.
- 16 1/2 foot buffers on public ditches must be installed by November 2018. (Minnesota Statute 103 E)
- Many small streams, headwaters and ditches aren't public. It will be up to the SWCD's to identify those that need buffers.
- Landowners retain use of the buffer unless enrolled in a program that has restrictions to use.
- Landowners can seed the buffer on their own without cost share and retain ability to use buffer as long as perennial vegetation is maintained.
- Landowner could adopt other practices to protect water quality if they are the same level of protection as a buffer.
- SWCD's will be receiving funding assistance to provide technical assistance to landowners.
- Pope SWCD is hiring an additional staff person to assist landowners this fall.
- The Board of Soil and Water Resources can withhold funds to SWCDs that fail to implement the law.
- Counties and watershed districts that do not enforce the law will also jeopardize their state funding.
- Regulatory entities (County, Watershed District, BWSR) can issue fines to landowners if they do not comply.
- No new financing is available to aid producers to take cropland out of production to plant buffers.

Watch for more details in upcoming newsletters regarding this new legislation or on our website at [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org).

## MINNESOTA AG WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO POPE COUNTY PRODUCERS

In June, Stearns SWCD hired Grant Pearson to work on the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). This has been a pilot program in only a few areas of the state over the last couple of years. The program was made available statewide this summer. Grant will provide assistance to 11 counties in the West Central Technical Service Area 2 this includes Pope County.

This new position is unique in working relationships with landowners and partners including the SWCD, agronomists, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture along with corporate sponsors.

The MAWQCP is a voluntary program

and opportunity for landowners to take the lead in implementing conservation practices to improve water quality. Those who implement and maintain approved farm management practices will be certified and in turn obtain regulatory certainty for a period of 10 years. Certified farmers are deemed in compliance with any new water quality rules or laws during the period of certification. Farmers interested in becoming certified also receive priority status for technical and financial assistance.

Pope SWCD staff has begun to reach out to producers regarding this new program. For more information on how to become

certified in the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program visit [www.mda.state.mn.us/awqcp](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/awqcp) or contact our office (320) 634-5327.



*ARTICLE CREDIT: STEARNS SWCD*

There may be a General Conservation Reserve Program Sign-up late this year into early next year and a Conservation Reserve Easement Program sign up in early 2016. Watch for more details this fall. We have not received anything official regarding these programs. If you have an interest, we are keeping a list. Stop by to inquire.

Mike Stai (MLA) handing donation to Holly Kovarik (Pope SWCD Manager)



Thank you to Minnewaska Lake Association for their cash match donation of \$3,000 to the grant for work around Lake Minnewaska

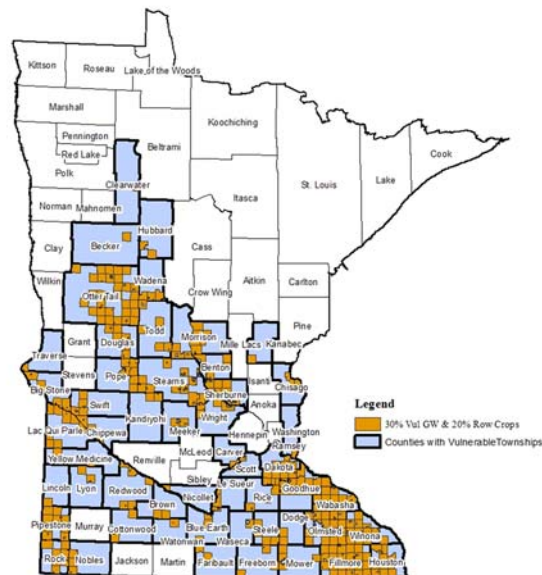


# DOMESTIC WELL NITRATE TESTING PROGRAM

Pope SWCD will be working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to test domestic wells in targeted townships as shown on the map to the left. These Townships will include: Leven, Westport, Glenwood, Grove Lake, Bangor, and Lake Johanna.

The quality of drinking water is important for every well owner. Nitrate is one of the most common ground water contaminants found in rural areas. Drinking water with high nitrate concentrations can cause serious health effects in infants and the presence of nitrates may be an indicate of other contaminants in water.

Wells in these townships may be at risk to nitrate contamination due to the type of geology and depth to groundwater. We will be coordinating with homeowners in these targeted townships to offer a free nitrate testing for their wells. They will be sent a letter and testing kit in the next couple of months. The information provided by the testing will help these families and provide valuable information on the presence of nitrates in drinking water. If you have questions please call our office and ask for Holly.



## 2015 CHS PRAIRIE LAKES/POPE SWCD FIELD DAY HELD

The CHS Prairie Lakes and Pope SWCD held a field day in Westport on July 16th. Several presentations were given including: Advances in Weed Control (BASF), Cost Per Bushel Optimization (CHS), Soil Moisture Sensors and Data Interpretation (UofM), Precision Trials: Benefits of Yield Point (CHS), and Nitrogen Management on Irrigated Corn (UofM). The day was developed in partnership with the following sponsors: BASF, CHS Prairie Lakes, Stearns SWCD, Minnesota Department of Ag, University of Minnesota, and Pope SWCD. A big thank you to all who made this event successful. For more information on the research at Rosholt visit our website at [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org).



## WELL SEALING COST SHARE AVAILABLE

Pope SWCD has some funding to provide cost-share assistance for well sealing. The SWCD will contract with the property owners to share the cost of priority-abandoned wells. In turn, the property owner must contract with a state-licensed well sealing contractor to perform all necessary work. All work must be done in accordance with the Minnesota Well Code, including the filing of a sealed well record with the Minnesota Department of Health. Upon completion of all of the required work and the submission of the required documents to the SWCD, reimbursement to the property owner will be made.

The Pope SWCD will provide 75% cost-share per well not to exceed a maximum of \$500 per well. The funding is limited therefore not everyone will be funded.

To learn more about this program or to request an application call 320-634-5327 and ask for Holly.



## POPE SWCD HOLDS CONSERVATION TOUR OF PROJECTS

A tour and meeting was held on June 12th starting at Captains Bar and Grill and continuing on a bus tour in the afternoon around Lake Minnewaska. This was part of a project funded through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Clean Water Partnership Grant to show awareness to projects and programs available to landowners the address erosion and improve water quality to Lake Minnewaska. The event was a success with approximately 50 in attendance. More information about the projects featured can be found on the Pope SWCD website at [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org). Thank you to all who made this event a success.



## KOVARIK APPOINTED TO CLEAN WATER COUNCIL

Governor Mark Dayton has named Holly Kovarik to the Minnesota Clean Water Council effective June 30, 2015 through June 7, 2019. Kovarik will be the representative on the council for soil and water conservation districts. The Clean Water Council was created through the Clean Water Legacy Act which was signed into law June 2, 2006. The council's role is to advise on the administration and implementation of the Clean Water Legacy Act. There are 28 representatives on the Council with state agencies having representation and are non-voting members and 15 voting members appointed by the Governor. Kovarik's appointment is as a voting member. Congrats! Watch for more details from her attendance at these meetings in upcoming newsletters.



## COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM CONTINUES

Jessica Oldakowski, a 2014 Biology graduate from the University of Minnesota, Morris was recently hired as the Cooperative Weed Management (CWMA) Intern for the Pope Soil and Water Conservation District. She grew up on a dairy farm north of St. Cloud Minnesota and has remained interested in agriculture and the outdoors. Over the last couple of years Jessica was employed with the USDA Soil Lab in Morris working on a Pollination Project. At Ag Reliant Genetics, she was a harvest intern and assisted in corn production line work. She enjoys working with plants, animals, and oilseed crops. A few of her hobbies include being outdoors, hunting, fishing, crafts, and playing tennis.

Jessica will continue the work under the Cooperative Weed Management program including education, documentation of infested sites, treatments, and re-seeding with local native seed. Our main goal with this program is to reduce the environmental and economic threats posed by invasive plant species in the grasslands of Pope and Swift Counties.

Education and raising awareness of the significance of these threats is key to achieving our goal.

The CWMA partners are: MnDot, Pope County Highway Department, Pope County Land and Resource Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation

Service, Farm Service Agency, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and the Pope and Swift Soil and water Conservation Districts.

These partners have established a steering committee and are working together to make this program a success. For more information or to report an infestation contact the CWMA intern Jessica Oldakowski at [Jessica.oldakowski@co.pope.mn.us](mailto:Jessica.oldakowski@co.pope.mn.us) or call 320-634-7793.





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## **“LOCAL HEROES-YOUR HARDWORKING POLLINATORS” WAS THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR’S POSTER CONTEST**

The Pope Soil and Water Conservation District is pleased to announce their winners for the 2015 “Local Heroes-Your Hardworking Pollinators” poster contest. The contest provided an opportunity for our local 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to convey their thoughts about the importance of our local pollinators through artwork. This year’s participating schools were Minnewaska Area Elementary, Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa Elementary, and Glacial Hills Elementary.

The poster contest is part of National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD- [nacdnet.org](http://nacdnet.org)) Stewardship Week, the longest running celebration of conservation in the country. NACD and the NACD Auxillary co-sponsor the event.

The theme, “Local Heroes- Your Hardworking Pollinators” helps students understand the importance of pollinators and its connection to things they eat and use every day. There are more than 100,000 species of insects, including bees, flies, moths, butterflies, and beetles that work hard as pollinators, as well as over 1,000 species of birds, reptiles, and mammals (including bats). These pollinators are responsible for 1 out of every 3 bites of food we eat. In the United States, pollination by honeybees and other insects produces \$40 billion worth of products annually. The students were also encouraged to help protect pollinators by planting native flowers to increase their habitat, install houses for native bees, supply water bowls for butterflies, reduce their pesticide use, and to support beekeepers by buying local honey.



**Minnewaska Area Elementary winners (above):**  
1st place- Britta Nelson, 2nd place- Kristen Glover,  
3rd place- Julia Kuehne



**Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa Elementary winners (above):**

1st place- William Tensen, 2nd place- Emily Kern, 3rd place- Hillary Prentice



**Glacial Hills Elementary winners (left):** 1st place- Lilian Peters, 2nd place- Janelle Jordall, 3rd place- Devin Kenneth Mikel

From these winners, three overall poster winners were selected to move onto our Area II poster contest. Pope County Overall Winners: 1st place- Britta Nelson, 2nd place- William Tensen, 3rd place- Kristen Glover

At our Area II meeting, our overall winners were judged against 8 other county winners. We are proud to announce that Britta Nelson was selected as the third place winner in Area II.

Everyone did a great job on their posters. The winners’ posters as well as a handful of other posters will be displayed in the Pope SWCD booth at the Pope County Fair.

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Amanda Conaway was recently hired by the Pope Soil and Water Conservation District as the Hydrologist Intern at the Rosholt Research Farm near Westport, Minnesota. She grew up in Roseville, MN and then moved to St. Cloud with her fiancé to attend St. Cloud State University. Amanda is currently pursuing her degree in hydrology with minors in geology and meteorology. She is very passionate about the environment and loves outdoor activities, especially hiking with her two dogs. She will work on this project through the end of the summer and the data that she is collecting will be important for understanding water quality impacts on specific soils.



The purpose of the study in Westport is to provide a better understanding of nitrogen fertilizer management and the water quality impacts on irrigated, sandy soils. The study will assess nitrogen loss resulting from different nitrogen fertilizer application rates, application timing, application methods and slow release nitrogen fertilizer products all under irrigation.

Root zone water is collected from a series of lysimeters (a porous ceramic tipped PVC pipe placed about 4 feet deep in the root zone). Lysimeter sample lines are enclosed in protective PVC pipe and buried in trenches below the surface so normal tillage and other farming operations can be performed. Water samples are collected weekly during the entire growing season and analyzed on site using a Hach Ultraviolet Spectrophotometer. The Hach machine analyzes the nitrate concentration in parts per million (ppm). Water volumes collected from the eight drain gauges provide information about water flow through the soil root zone. All of the data that is collected over the growing season is sent to the University of Minnesota to help revise nitrogen fertilizer recommendations for irrigated coarse-textured (sandy) soils.

There are risks associated with high levels of nitrates in the groundwater that directly affect our everyday lives. High levels of nitrates that get into our streams and lakes can cause overstimulated growth of aquatic plants. This in turn can possibly take up all of the dissolved oxygen that is contained within the water and cause large fish kills. High levels of nitrates in the groundwater can also be harmful to humans and livestock when consumed in concentrated amounts. It can occur naturally in groundwater at levels typically in the range of 0 to 3 parts per million (ppm). Human activities such as sewage disposal, livestock production, and lawn and crop fertilization can potentially elevate the level of nitrate in groundwater. Nitrate has been found above the 10 ppm drinking water standard in Minnesota groundwater (specifically drinking water), mainly in areas of sandy and rocky soil that allows for fast movement of water through the soil. Infants younger than 6 months are extremely susceptible to the harmful effects of high levels of nitrates in the water.

The Rosholt Field Day held with Prairie Lakes Coop will be held on July 16th.

This program has been funded by a grant to the Pope SWCD from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The current grant expires in 2016. This is a unique public private partnership effort. The following agencies have partnered on this project to make it a success: Pope SWCD, Stearns SWCD, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, University of Minnesota, and Prairie Lakes Coop.

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## SHORELINE RESTORATION PROGRAM



**The Pope SWCD has been working on shoreline restoration projects in the County. A grant was awarded in 2015 to conduct additional projects. If you have lakeshore property with erosion concerns please contact our office to set up a site visit. Contact Holly at 320-634-5327 or [holly.kovarik@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:holly.kovarik@mn.nacdnet.net).**

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# POPE SOIL & WATER



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1680 Franklin St North  
Glenwood, MN 56334

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## *IN THIS ISSUE*

**Page 1:** Nitrate Clinic, Fair Booth, Staff Changes

**Page 2:** Buffers Updates

**Page 3:** Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program Available, MLA Donation

**Page 4:** Rosholt Field Day, Nitrate Testing, Well Sealing Cost Share

**Page 5:** Tour Held, Clean Water Council Appointment, CWMA Program

**Page 6:** 2015 Poster Contest Winners Announced

**Page 7:** Cooperative Weed Management, Shoreline Restoration Program

## *IMPORTANT DATES*

Board Meetings are held the **third Tuesday of each month at 7am.**  
The public is welcome to join us.

June 16	SWCD Board Meeting
July 16	Rosholt Field Day
July 21	SWCD Board Meeting
August 18	SWCD Board Meeting



### *SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS*

*Randy Pederson, Mike Billehus, Tom Talle, D.Gary Reents, and Keith Nygaard*



### *SWCD STAFF*

*Kelly Erickson (Technician), Holly Kovarik (Manager), Britta Haseman (Farmbill Technician)*

