



## Chippewa River Watershed Partners Embark on Planning Effort

The Chippewa River Watershed partners have worked together for many years, going as far back as 1998. A group called the Chippewa River Watershed Project (CRWP) has worked since that time to improve water quality in the watershed. This group completed watershed monitoring and worked to secure funding to do Best Management Practices (BMPs) and conduct education and outreach across the watershed. This group recently reorganized and is now called the Chippewa River Watershed Association (CRWA).

I have heard from some constituents that are wondering about the status of this group. About three years ago the partnership worked to reorganize its Joint Powers Agreement. The partnership previously only included the Counties and the group worked to revise the agreement to include Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). This group also began efforts to prepare for an application to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the "One Watershed One Plan" program. The CRWA was successful in attaining a planning grant from BWSR.

This program allows counties to transition from county-based water plans to watershed-based planning. The planning area for the Chippewa River One Watershed One Plan includes portions of Otter Tail, Grant, Douglas, Stevens, Pope, Swift, Chippewa, and Kandiyohi counties. County and SWCD Boards in each of these counties have entered into a Joint Powers Agreement for the purpose of developing a watershed plan and to restore and protect the water and soil resources in the Chippewa River Watershed planning area. Pope Soil and Water Conservation District staff are acting on behalf of the partnership to coordinate this effort and to manage the fiscal duties.

This planning effort will take approximately two years to complete and at its conclusion will provide state funding for conservation projects that are considered a priority for improving and protecting our resources as identified and agreed upon by the CRWA members.

**The group has planned a public kick off and annual meeting on Tuesday, April 5th at 5:30 p.m. at the Minnewaska House in Glenwood, Minnesota. Please RSVP by March 28.** This meeting is an opportunity for citizens that reside in the watershed to provide feedback and learn more about monitoring, funding opportunities, and status of work of the Chippewa River Watershed Association and partners. This meeting will include a meal. For more information give Holly Kovarik a call at 320-634-5327 or email [holly.kovarik@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:holly.kovarik@mn.nacdnet.net). Register here at: <https://bit.ly/3HfBmN>

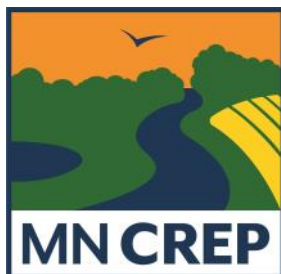


## Reinvest In Minnesota Program

The Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) perpetual easement program has been active in Pope County for well over two decades. Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) site inspections were completed this year by Pope SWCD staff. Site inspections for 2021 included 98 RIM sites which equaled 5607.20 acres. Almost all fields met the standards for the program. There were 2 landowners that did not meet these standards and the Board of Water and Soil Resources was notified. Standards for the program include: having a stand of native vegetative cover, no permanent structures on fields, no parking equipment on fields, no new food plots that are not in the Conservation Plan, and no non-approved grazing.

Pope SWCD assists landowners with updates to conservation plans, property ownership changes, and updates to cover.

If you have questions about the RIM program contact our office and ask for Nicole Brede. You may reach her at 320-634-5327.



The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is another perpetual easement program that has been available in Pope County. We did not have any new sites enrolled in this program in 2021 in Pope County. If you are interested in exploring CREP more you may contact our office and ask for Nicole Brede.

## CLEAN WATER FUND GRANTS UPDATES

Pope SWCD has funding in the Lake Minnewaska, East Branch of the Chippewa River, and Lake Emily sub watersheds.

These funds will be used to work with landowners on erosion and sediment control practices. There are several projects in design phase. If you own land in this area and have an erosion concern give Holly Kovarik at 320-634-5327 a call. There may be potential for cost share assistance.

We are able to work together with our federal NRCS partners to provide up to 75% overall cost of the project. Even if you apply for EQIP with NRCS, please reach out to the SWCD in addition to see if you have state funding opportunities available. You will need to get a release of information form from NRCS so that they can share the information they have with us.



Project areas shown above: Lake Minnewaska (Pope Co.) and East Branch of Chippewa River (Pope and Swift counties) Watersheds

For more details on the Clean Water Fund visit: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/clean-water-fund>.

## Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program is a program through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture but assisted by Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state. Each producer that signs up works one on one with a certification specialist and our Pope SWCD staff. Pope County has 38 certified operations 23,772 acres.

In 2021 Pope County certified a total of 4,365 acres including 8 farm operations.

### STATEWIDE INFO

The program statewide has 1,156 certified farms and a total of 808,187 certified acres

2,341 new conservation practices installed

Financial Assistance funding utilized by 12 Pope County landowners. \$39,760.23 for new conservation practices installed.





## 2021 Educational Events

Manure Virtual Field Day (100+ registered)

MASWCD Legislative Virtual Day at the Capitol

Poster Contest (3 schools)

Stewardship Week

COW Meeting for CRWA 1W1P Resolution

Pope County Fair Booth

Rosholt Field Day (attendance 70)

Area II Meeting Hosted at Rosholt (60 attendance)

Budget Appropriation Meeting to County Board

Pope & Stevens Water Fest

Pope & Stevens Conservation Day

Boy Scout Presentation/Tour (15 count)

AVL Lake Association Meeting (20 count)

Starbuck Study Club (15 count)



## Ravine Stabilization Project Completed



*Pictured: Ravine stabilization project in the City of Glenwood was completed in 2021. There were 6 structures constructed in the ravines to stabilize the area. This project will reduce 4.15 tons of sediment per year and 3.45 pounds of phosphorus annually from affecting Lake Minnewaska. This project will also help with downstream flooding impacts. Total project cost \$278,250 with \$208,687.50 supported by this grant from the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the Clean Water Fund. The City of Glenwood partnered for the remaining costs and also sealed 3 old wells. This project will have ground water protection benefits as well. Pope SWCD wrote the grant and has administered the funding for this project.*

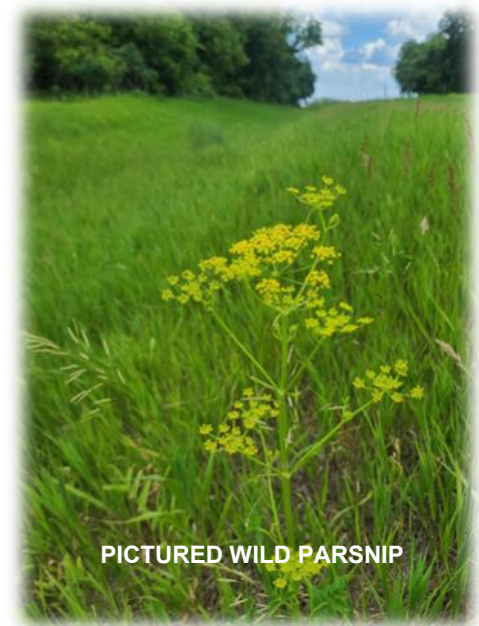


# COOPERATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Pope-Swift Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) was awarded a \$5,000 grant from MDA in the spring of 2021. CWMA spraying was contracted to a consultant which cost roughly \$3,000 to complete spraying. The contractor worked on spraying 14 miles of road ditches in Tara Township for Swift County. The focus was spraying the invasive species, Wild Parsnip. The remainder of the funding was used for administrative time.

Pope and Swift Ag. Inspectors also came together to collect Leafy Spurge Beetles and distributed them to private landowners and other counties. Ag. inspectors time was paid through a separate grant. Education work was completed by sending out Weed of the Week articles in the local papers and on social media. Species we educated the public on included Wild Parsnip, Leafy Spurge, Cow Parsnip, Palmer Amaranth, Spotted Knapweed, and Buckthorn. Working with other local partners we have been notified of 11 new sites that will need monitoring or management in the future. These sites have all be recorded online using the EDDMapSPRO and ISMTrack websites. Finally all locations have been reported to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Pope SWCD applied for an MDA Noxious Weed grant for 2022 and we are working on an application to the Board of Water and Soil Resources now. Awards have not yet been announced. If these funds are awarded we will continue to work on the treatment of invasives in Pope and Swift Counties.



PICTURED WILD PARSNIP

## WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT UPDATES

**Pope SWCD administers the Wetland Conservation Act. In 2021, there were 220 contacts made including 15 official decisions. These decisions included: 5 boundary and type determinations, 2 exemptions, 7 ag bank exemptions, 4 potential violation investigations, and 1 no-loss application.**



*We want to welcome Kimberly DeMorett. Kimberly was hired in February as the Resource and Outreach Technician for the Pope SWCD. She has worked for us for the past two seasons at Rosholt and this is now a fulltime position for her. We are excited for you to meet her. We will share more about her in our next Newsletter. Welcome Kimberly to Pope SWCD.*



# OUTLET CREEK WATER QUALITY IMPROVES



The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has 53 lakes, and segments of rivers and streams, that are proposed for delisting in 2022 from the impaired waters list. There are 13 of the 53 that can be directly tied to a particular restoration effort. Pope SWCD is pleased to share that 4 on this list are located in Pope County.

Outlet Creek, which flows from Lake Minnewaska to Lake Emily southwest of Starbuck, was listed in 2012 for aquatic life. The creek is located within the Lake Emily watershed and has been the focus of four Clean Water Fund grants from BWSR.

In 2015 a CWF grant was received to complete an assessment and project prioritization process in this subwatershed. Due to this effort 3 implementation grants were received in 2016, 2017, and 2018. The

work in this subwatershed has been mostly water and sediment control basins targeted at addressing erosion and water quality concerns for Outlet Creek. The combined projects keep an estimated 2,237 tons of sediment and 2,565 pounds of phosphorus out of the creek annually. Water quality has improved in Outlet Creek and is proposed for delisting in 2022. The work completed in this watershed is an indication now that it has improved conditions in the watershed and especially in Outlet Creek. To see the full Board of Water and Soil Resources website at [www.bwsr.state.mn.us](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us) for the article titled "Delisting sampler: Clean Water Funds linked to lake, stream improvements."

## Chippewa River Watershed

### Plan Kick Off & Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 5th 5:30PM-8PM

Minnewaska House (Glenwood, MN)

Register online at <https://bit.ly/3HfBymN> or call 320-634-5327

**You are invited to a public kick off and annual meeting on Tuesday, April 5th at 5:30 p.m. Register by March 28th at the link above.**

**Pope SWCD provides services including tree planting, grass seeding, mowing, and rental services. They also provide materials for seeding projects and trees. Contact the SWCD for your spring planting and maintenance needs. Ask for Kelly!**



# Buffer Program Updates

The 2021 buffer objectives included, scouting existing buffers for compliance, field checking status reviews for landowners, and working on enforcement with Pope County. Ending in 2021 we have all but 3 landowners that are compliant with the MN Buffer Law. Currently there are 2 landowners that are in progress of completing / re-establishing their buffers. This past year we sent one landowner to enforcement with Pope County. We will be continuing to check buffers in the coming year as we get new imagery and continue to site check while in the field.



Technical assistance to do alternative practices can be addressed when a landowner makes the request to our office. If you have any buffer questions, please contact Nicole Brede. The DNR Buffer Map can be found online at <http://arcgis.dnr.state.mn.us/gis/buffersviewer/>.

## Nathan and Angie Walter Family Selected as Outstanding Conservationists



Nathan and Angie Walter of Westport, Minnesota, operate a 390-acre Organic Minnesota Department of Agriculture Ag Water Quality Certified family dairy farm raising corn, hay, rye, barley, oats, and cover crops for use on their farm. They milk 100 Guernsey/Red Holstein/Norwegian Cross Cows, raise 50 heifers, 20 calves, broiler chickens, and laying hens. They have implemented: an ag waste storage facility, nutrient management plan, shelterbelt, cover crops, grazing plan, reduced tillage, cover crops, no-till, and soil health practices.

The Walters are active members in their community, Sustainable Farming

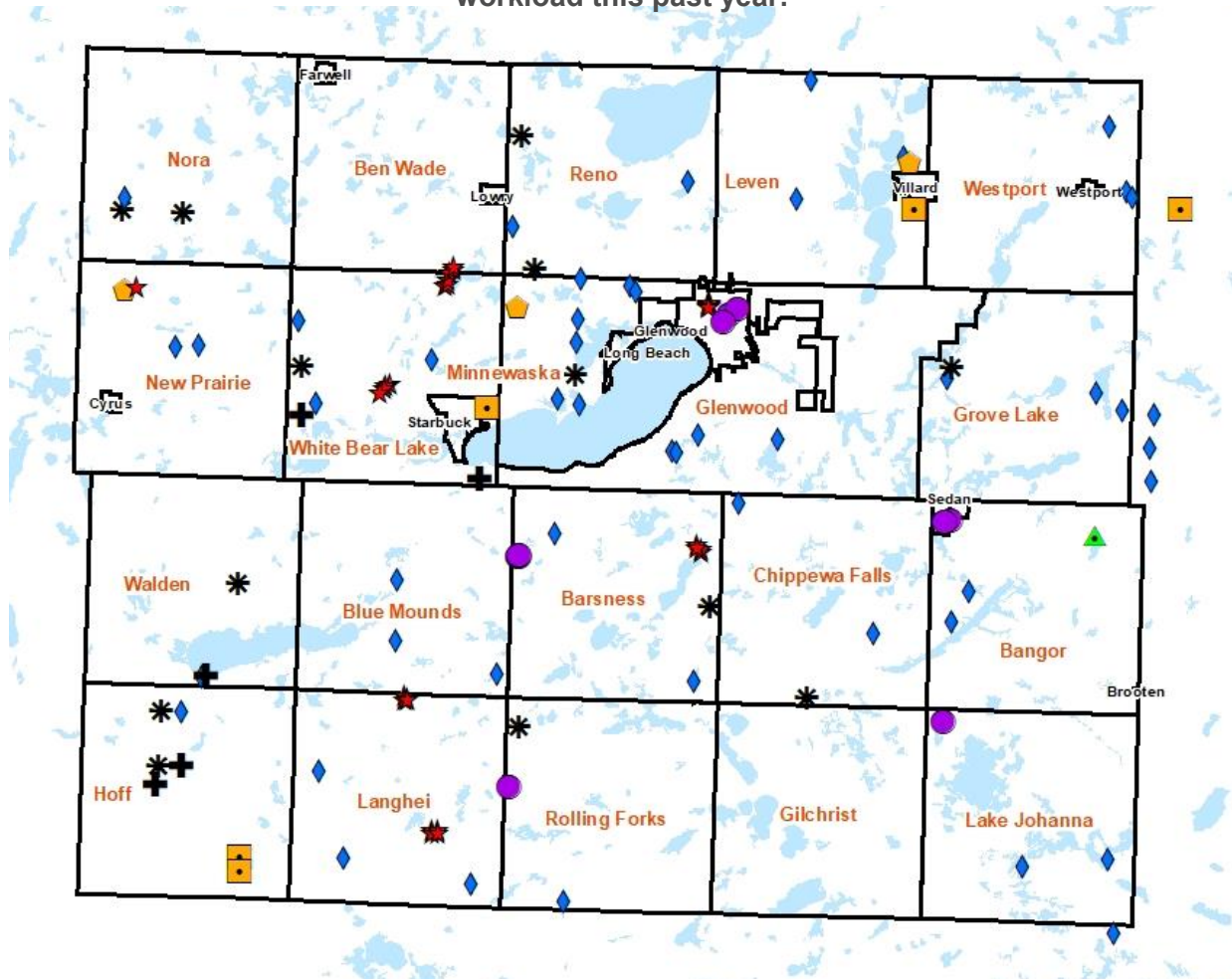
Association (SFA), Organic Valley, 4-H and serve in leadership roles in these organizations. They are mentors for the SFA Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program. The Walter's are a premier example of regenerative agriculture.

The Walters were the Pope County Outstanding Conservationists and were selected as the West Central Area 2 Finalists and were 1 of 8 producers given an additional award at the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District Conference in December.



# 2021 Pope SWCD Projects Implemented

Pope SWCD/NRCS continues to work on a variety of practices. The workload remains high and state project funds are potentially available in the Lake Emily, Lake Minnewaska, East Branch Watershed, and City of Glenwood project areas. In addition, Pope SWCD coordinates with watershed partners on other special project funds to assist landowners. The NRCS continues to administer federal programs for project implementation. All landowners are encouraged to stop in to visit with staff about funding options. The map below highlights SWCD project workload this past year.



## Other SWCD Activities include:

Observation Well Monitoring	25 Wells
Precipitation Monitoring	15 Count
Rosholt Farm Research Facility	40 Acres



Map Legend	Quantity	Symbol
Structures	29 Count	★
Well Sealing	10 Wells Sealed	●
Grass/Drill/Packer/Tillage	52 Sites	◆
Mowing	5 Sites	✚
Tree Plantings	13 Sites	✱
Irrigation Management Service	5 pivots	◻
Diversions/Lined Channel	2 Sites	◼
Critical Area Planting/ Shelterbelt Renovation	2 Sites	▲

## ROSHOLT RESEARCH FARM UPDATES



Research studies continue at the Rosholt Research Farm in Westport. There were several studies this last year that are continuous from last season, as well as some new ones.

Nitrogen and water quality research has been an ongoing study at Rosholt. The goal is to evaluate the management of nitrogen fertilizers and cover crops in irrigated crop production and their impacts on water quality.

Another continuing study is evaluating the management and interactions between nitrogen fertilizer and irrigation and their impacts on water quality. This study applies different irrigation rates and nitrogen rates on corn. Soil moisture is also measured. A comparison study is happening at the U of M Sand Plain Research Farm in Becker, MN.

There is also a study that involves the perennial Kernza grass and nitrate leaching. Kernza has deep roots that can capture and utilize nitrates that would otherwise leach into the groundwater. Water samples from in-ground lysimeters are taken from all these study areas and analyzed for nitrates. Most of the water sample analyzing is done at Rosholt.

A field day was held in August with over 70 people participating. A second outreach event was held in early September with over 60 participating. If you would like to learn more about the farm and research visit our website at [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org).

Funding for the work at Rosholt has been funded by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) and the Clean Water Fund as a part of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment. For more information visit [www.lccmr.leg.mn](http://www.lccmr.leg.mn) and [www.legacy.mn.gov/clean-water-fund](http://www.legacy.mn.gov/clean-water-fund). The current partners are listed below for the Rosholt Research Farm.



*Pictured are Pope & Stearns SWCD Staff and Supervisors with owners of the Minnewaska House who now have a Kernza beer on tap.*



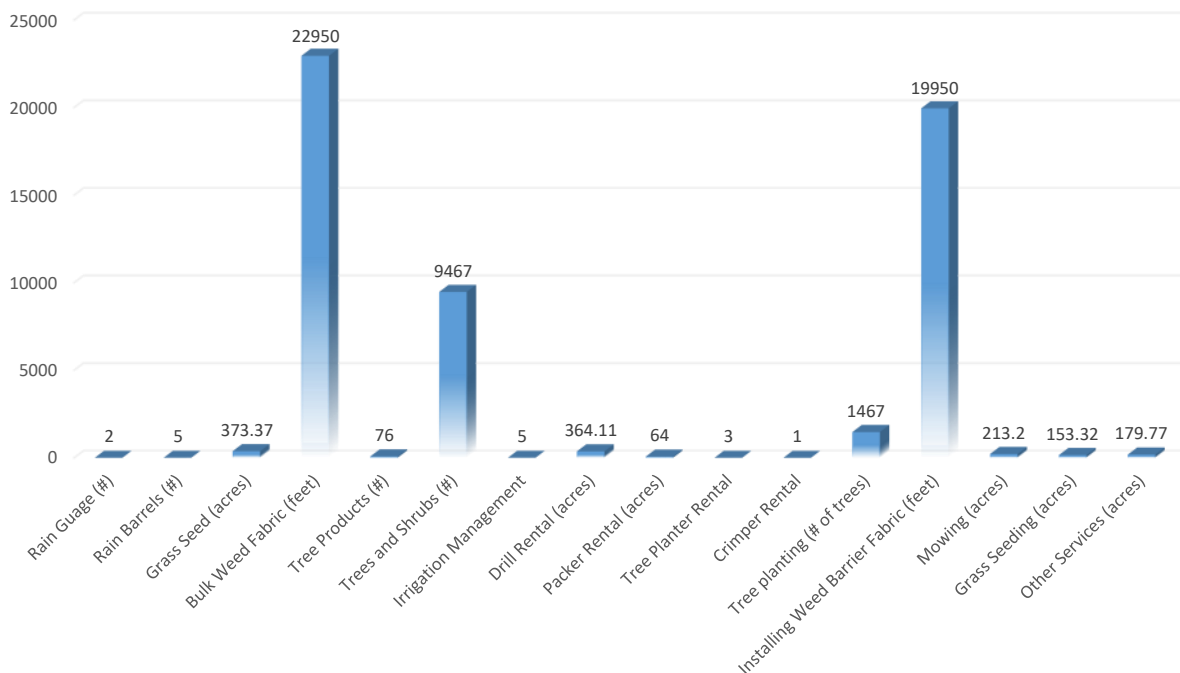
## WALK IN ACCESS PROGRAM

The 2021 Walk-In Access (WIA) sign up had 1 new landowner accepted into the program enrolling roughly 70 acres. We have a total of 2 landowners enrolled now totaling 226 acres.

Looking into 2022 there is a new sign up from February 15 through April 15. The payment rate is \$18/ acre. Contracts are anywhere from 1 to 3 years with a minimum of 40 acres to enroll. Please consider enrolling if you have native wildlife habitat and are willing to allow the public to hunt. If you have an interest in the WIA program contact Nicole Brede in our office at 320-634-5327.



### 2021 SALES PROGRAM BY ITEM QUANTITY



#### USDA-NRCS 2021 Activities:

Environmental Quality Incentive Program	2,570 acres	\$220,000
Conservation Stewardship Program	42,000 acres	\$384,000

#### USDA-FSA 2021 Activities:

Conservation Reserve Program Total Rental Payments	\$2,025,099
Conservation Reserve Program new or reenrolled contracts	166 count

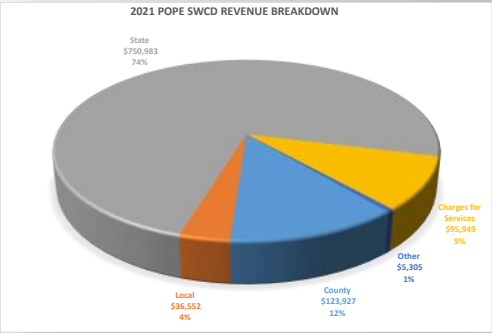
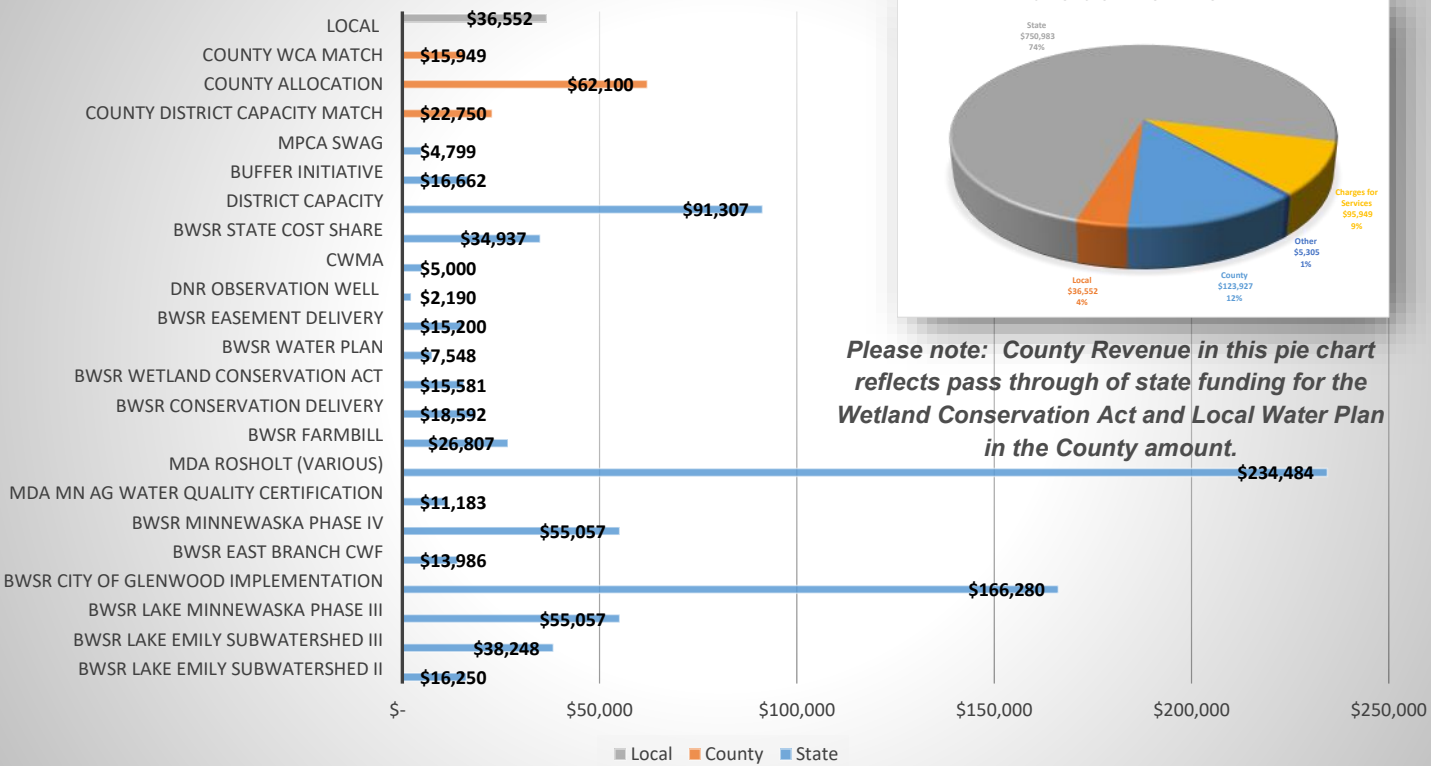


*This information has been provided by our federal partner agencies on work completed in 2021 and the financial contributions made for programs and projects for the benefit of the citizens in Pope County. They administer additional programs but these are reported here as they do intersect with the work the Pope SWCD is striving to do under the overall water plan activities for the County. We are sharing this information to provide a larger picture of the total work being accomplished to improve and protect our natural resources.*

# Unaudited Financial Information

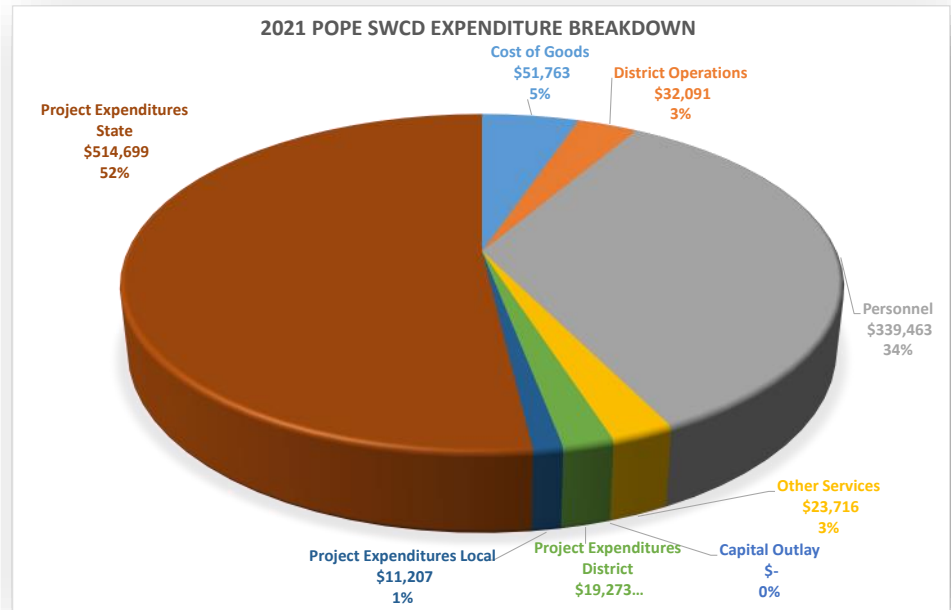
The Pope SWCD is not a taxing authority and depends on funding support from the County and other partners to leverage technical assistance and cost share dollars. The financial information represents all SWCD funding including cost share to landowners. State sources are for landowner projects and cost share assistance. This information does not include federal funding available in cost share to landowners. These financials only reflect funding passed through the SWCD. This financial information is unaudited. The Pope SWCD annually is required to complete an audit. The audited financial statements for 2021 will be made available once the audit is complete.

## 2021 Funding SWCD Recieved for Operations and Projects



Please note: County Revenue in this pie chart reflects pass through of state funding for the Wetland Conservation Act and Local Water Plan in the County amount.

Please note: County Revenue in this bar chart does not reflect pass through of state funding for the Wetland Conservation Act and Local Water Plan in the County colored bars. They are reflected as state funding due to their origination.



Lined Channel Project completed, pictured during construction.





# Irrigators Clinic

**Thursday, March 17, 2022**

**9:00 a.m. Registration—3:00 p.m.**

**McKinney's**

***300 14th St. S, Benson, MN 56215***



**Attention Irrigators!**

Mark your calendars and plan on joining fellow irrigators for a great sharing and learning opportunity! Tentative agenda items include: Soil Health and Tillage, Irrigation Research/Management Strategies, Climate Condition Updates, Soil Health Champion, and Funding Opportunities for Irrigators. Local sponsors will be on site with informational booths and technologies.

**Pre-registration is required. \$10 Registration Fee (includes meal).**

**Registration deadline: Monday, March 7, 2022.** Make checks payable to: Pope SWCD, mail payment to Pope SWCD Attention Holly Kovarik, 1680 Franklin Street North, Glenwood, MN 56334. Pope SWCD phone number 320-634-5327. Registration at the door \$20 and meal cannot be guaranteed.

***4.5 CEU Credits for Soil and Water Management pending.***



## POPE SOIL & WATER



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1680 Franklin St North  
Glenwood, MN 56334

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### **Important Dates**

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

March 15	Board Meeting
April 19	Board Meeting
May 17	Board Meeting
June 21	Board Meeting



**2021 SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Keith Nygaard, Tom Talle, Randy Pederson, D. Gary Reents,  
Randy Mitteness



**SWCD STAFF**

Nicole Brede (Technician), Holly Kovarik (Manager), Kimberly  
DeMorett (Technician), Kelly Erickson (Technician)