



## CLEAN WATER FUND GRANTS UPDATES

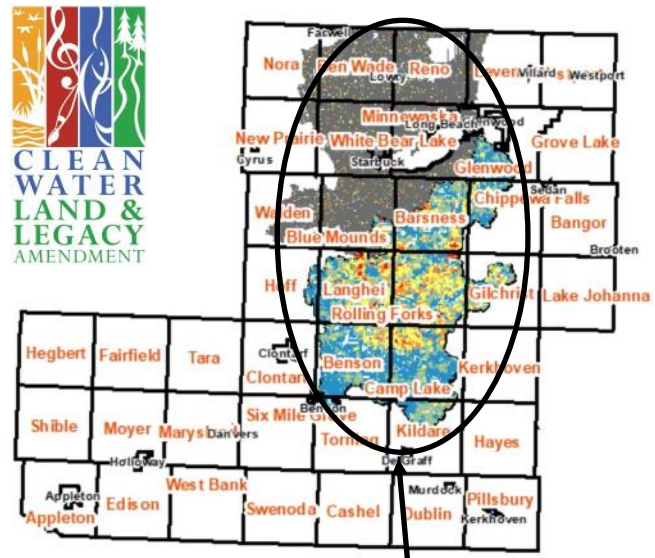
Pope SWCD has been focusing implementation work in the City of Glenwood, Lake Minnewaska, East Branch of the Chippewa River, and Lake Emily sub watersheds this past year.

These funds were used to work with landowners on erosion and sediment control and stormwater practices. We spent \$283,782 this past year implementing these projects. These funds are from the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment through competitive grants we applied for and received from the Board of Water and Soil Resources. 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.

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

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.

See page 2 for more updates on projects completed this past year.



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

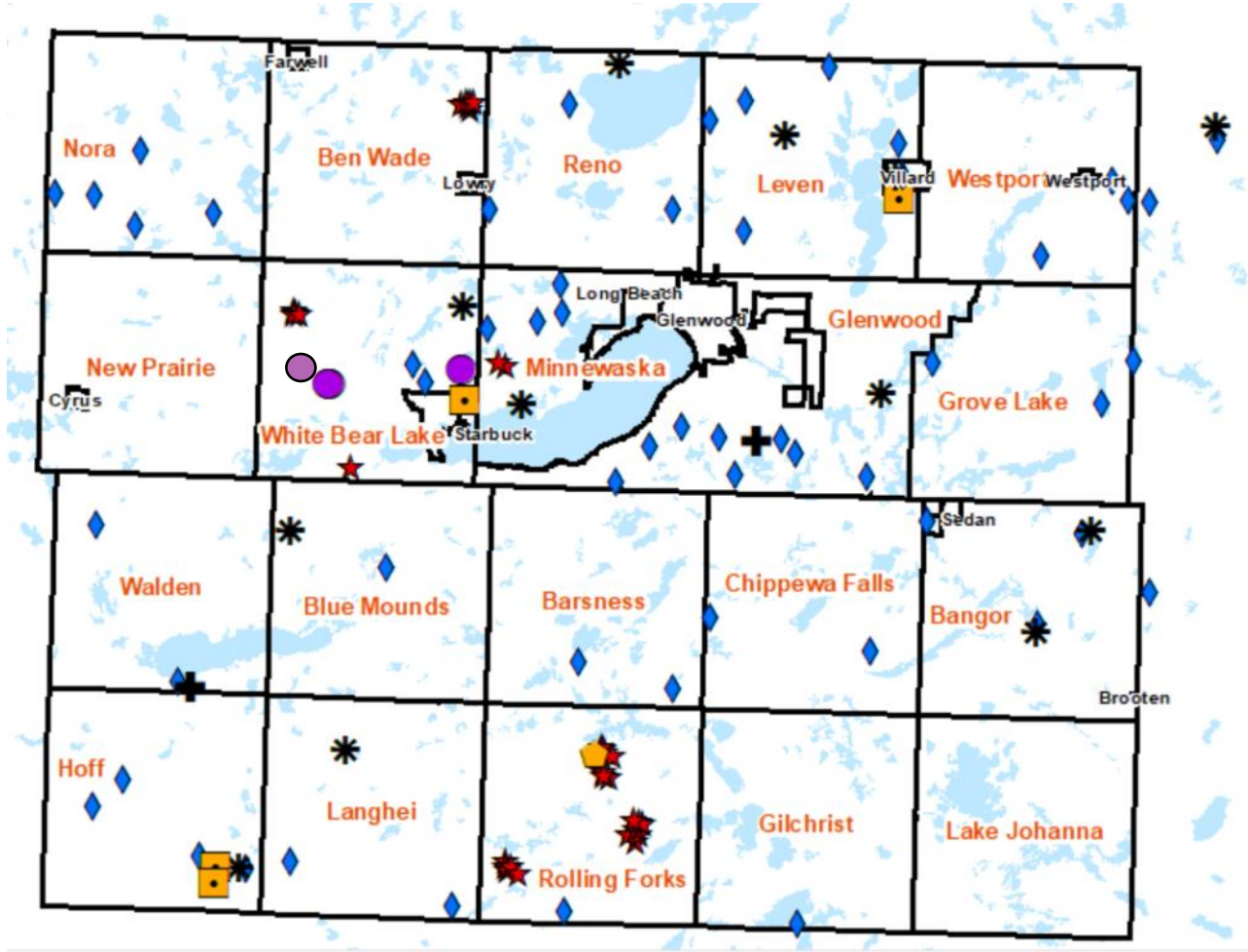


## Implementing Innovative Irrigation Practices

The Pope SWCD is a partner on a program with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and about 20-30 other SWCDs and organizations to implement irrigation practices. The group was successful in attaining funding through the NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program which began in 2021 and will go till 2026. We worked with 6 producers this past year that requested technical assistance. They were interested in variable rate, updating sprinklers, and moisture sensors. We did not have an application funded this round but we did utilize other programs for some of these landowners to implement these irrigation practices. If you are interested in learning about this program stop by to see us!

# 2022 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 the 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

*If you have an interest in a project on your land give our office a call. We are continually working on solutions for landowners to resource concerns and attainment of funding for eligible projects.*

*We are here to help.*

Map Legend	Quantity	Symbol
Structures	28 Count	★
Well Sealing	3 Wells Sealed	●
Grass/Drill/Packer/Tillage	55 Sites	◆
Mowing	2 Sites	✚
Tree Plantings	12 Sites	✱
Irrigation Management Service	4 pivots	■
Waterway	1 Sites	⬠



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# **Reinvest In Minnesota Program**

**Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) program is a perpetual (lifetime) easement program, with a contract between landowner and the state of Minnesota. Landowners have enrolled their property into this program to increase wildlife habitat in their area. Landowners must manage natural vegetative cover to meet what is in their conservation plan, no grazing unless approved, no building on easement, and no parking equipment on easement. In fall of 2022, the Pope SWCD staff did site inspections on 60 RIM easements. All sites met program standards and we are proud to say we had no landowners in violation.**

**Our county has over 200 RIM easement contracts across the county and multiple landowners come in throughout the year to work with our office. Landowners can have a variety of questions but the most common are about, ownership changes, upgrading their habitat cover, and adding or moving food plots.**

**Please contact our office if you have ownership changes to your RIM easement or if you have additional questions. Call Pope SWCD at 320-634-5327 and ask for Nicole Brede.**

## **Barsness Park Buckthorn Project**

Pope SWCD has been working with the City of Glenwood, Glenwood Park Board, Buckthorn Brigade Volunteer group, Ag Inspector and others to focus efforts in the 250 acre public park to treat an invasive plant called buckthorn. In 2022, a \$50,000 grant was secured by our office to treat 41.22 acres in the park. It is estimated that about 100 acres of the 250 acre park has Buckthorn. The work in the first phase is near complete with the majority of the treatment happening in the last few months of last year. This included both mechanical and chemical treatment.

The buckthorn is preventing native grasses from thriving and has created access concerns. The barren dirt in these buckthorn infested areas no longer providing habitat for wildlife and has eliminated the natural water filter system. This runoff does impact Lake Minnewaska.

A second phase was applied for and the group was recently notified that another \$50,000 has been secured for another 32.5 acre area in the park. The funding is from the Department of Natural Resources Conservation Partner Legacy program. The Buckthorn Brigade is always looking for volunteers interested in helping. This group along with the City are focusing on other efforts in the park including using goats for treating certain areas of the park as an example. To learn more or if you have questions on how you can help give us a call at 320-634-5327.

***Pictured: Buckthorn in an area in Barsness Park prior to treatment.***



***Pictured: Contractor working on treatment and removal of the Buckthorn late last fall.***





## **2022 Educational Events**

Chippewa River Watershed Association Bus Tour (29 participants)

CRWA Plan Kick Off Meeting (100 participants)

Irrigation Clinic (35 participants)

MASWCD Legislative Virtual Meeting

Board of Water and Soil Resources Academy Presentation on Rosholt (30 participants)

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting Presentation

United Lutheran Church Presentation (20 participants)

Glenwood Rotary Presentation (20 participants)

Be Kind Group Event

Outstanding Conservationist Selection

KMS Conservation Education Event (40 participants)

Poster Contest (3 schools, 300 entries)

Stewardship Week (20 churches)

Envirothon

Pope County Fair Booth

Rosholt Field Day (attendance 60)

Budget Appropriation Meeting to County Board

Pope County Committee of the Whole Meeting for Sauk River Watershed CWMP

Pope & Stevens Water Fest (380 participants)

Pope & Stevens Conservation Day (300 participants)

Board of Water and Soil Resources Staff Meeting (50 participants)

Nitrate Clinic (30 participants)

Pope County Pheasant Restoration Committee (300 participants)



# Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) is a voluntary certification for farmers that manage their agriculture land with goals towards cleaner water. First benefit to becoming certified is this allows them a funding opportunity for implementing water quality conservation practices. Funding through Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) will provide 75% Cost Share, up to \$5,000 a year for approved practices. Second benefit is to provides recognition for landowners to promote their farm or business and that they are proactive toward clean water. Third benefit is for farmers to have regulatory certainty for any new water quality rules or laws through their certification.



In 2022, Pope SWCD has **certified 4 landowners totaling 3,228 acres**, which brings our **county total to 41 landowners certified over 24,062 acres**. We had multiple landowners use their financial assistance funding towards; water quality practices such as rock inlets, windbreaks, low pressure conversion, and waste storage facility. We are already working with landowners on rock intakes and no-till cover crop funding for 2023.

The program statewide has 1,156 certified farms and a total of 808,187 certified acres. This includes 2,341 new conservation practices installed.

**Financial Assistance funding has been utilized by 12 Pope County landowners. This has totaled \$39,760.23 in cost share for new conservation practices installed.**

If you are interested in becoming certified, have questions about the program, or have questions about your current certification please contact Nicole Brede in our office at 320-634-5327.

## WETLAND CONSERVATION ACT UPDATES

**Pope SWCD administers the Wetland Conservation Act. In 2022, there were 159 contacts made including 11 official decisions. These decisions included: 1 exemption, 2 replacement plans, 3 ag bank exemptions, 1 wetland bank, and 4 potential violation investigations. In addition work included: 3 enforcement situations, 5 exemptions that were not included in a formal application.**



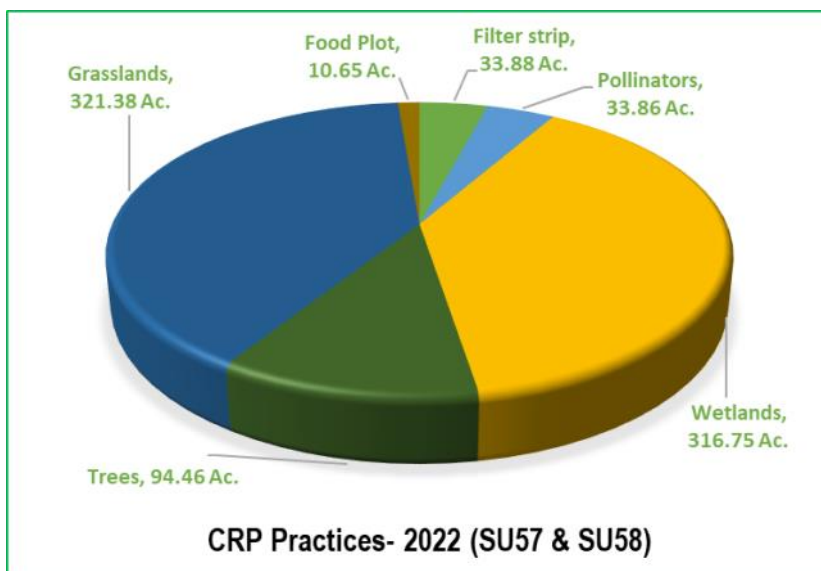
Pope SWCD has hired Houston Engineering to do a stormwater analysis of the City of Lowry and contributing watersheds. This project is funded by the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment. Once the analysis is completed it will help the SWCD with implementation of projects with landowners to help with water quality and erosion concerns. The survey and modeling work started late in 2022 and a final report will be available sometime this year.



# Conservation Reserve Program

In 2022, the Pope SWCD assisted NRCS with writing 40 CRP Conservation Plans for Sign-Ups 57 & 58. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a federal program that allows agriculture land to be planted into native cover while providing the landowner with a rental payment and cost share to implement the practices. When enrolling into the program the contract can be for 10-15 years. Landowners manage native vegetative cover on their land instead of planting crops. This program is beneficial in providing soil stabilization, water filtering, building topsoil, wildlife habitat, and more. Not all CRP practices allow food plots, but they are a great source of additional food for wildlife.

In the graph below you can see that we worked on practices including; 13 Grasslands (321.38 Acres), 10 Wetlands (316.75 Acres), 12 Trees (94.46 Acres), 5 Filter Strips (33.88 Acres), 2 Pollinators (33.86 Acres), and 6 Food Plots (10.65 Acres). Grassland practices was our largest focus for Conservation Plans. **In total, we assisted in enrolling 810.98 acres into the CRP program for Pope County.** If you have interest or questions regarding CRP, please contact the Pope County FSA office at 320-634-5143.



# Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is designed to take agriculture land and convert it into native vegetative cover. This native cover will provide habitat for wildlife, stabilize soil, and filter water. When enrolling into this program the acres are enrolled into a conservation contract with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and when that contract expires (In 10-15 years) this automatically will become enrolled into a perpetual easement with the state of Minnesota. When enrolling this land into a perpetual easement this means the land will permanently be used for wildlife habitat. As the owner of the land, you get to enjoy the native habitat for activities such as hunting, bird watching, exploring and more. It is the landowner's responsibility to maintain native cover on the land. In 2022 Pope SWCD spent nearly 40 hours working with 8 different landowners to see if the CREP program was for them.

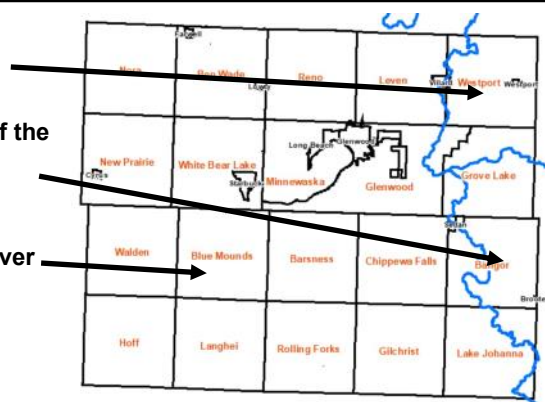
If this sounds appealing to you, I can give you a rough quote and talk to you about your options. Contact Nicole Brede with Pope SWCD at 320-634-5327 ext:102.

Pope County has three main watersheds where we have Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans. The Chippewa River Watershed group is actively planning and the other two watersheds have an adopted plan. Pope SWCD staff meets each month with each of these partnerships to plan and implement the plan goals. To learn more about watershed planning visit our website at <https://popeswcd.org/conservation-plans-data-and-reports/>.

Sauk River Watershed

North Fork of the Crow River Watershed

Chippewa River Watershed



# Buffer Program Updates

The Buffer Law was signed by Governor Mark Dayton in 2015 requiring perennial vegetation buffers to be installed along lakes, rivers, streams, and public drainage ditches. These buffers are designed to help filter out phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment as well as provide wildlife habitat. These buffers were to be installed by two deadlines: **Public Waters deadline was November 1, 2017 and Public Drainage Systems deadline was November 1, 2018.**



SWCD's across the state of Minnesota have been working with landowners on installation of these buffers or review of the parcels for implementing alternative practices. In Pope County approximately 4,445 parcels were reviewed initially and now again in 2022 with the new aerial imagery. If a violation of buffer law is found; the Pope SWCD will be informing the enforcing agency and the Board of Water and Soil Resources. Any appeals will be handled by the regulatory entity with the Pope SWCD staff providing technical information regarding the buffer law and the project site. It will depend on where the public water or drainage ditch is located on who the enforcing entity is. In Pope County it is either Pope County Land and Resource Management Office, North Fork Crow River Watershed District, or the Sauk River Watershed District.

Pope SWCD **conducted on-site inspections for 9 landowners** after an ariel imagery review of all parcels. Our office **sent 8 Notifications of Noncompliance to Pope County for enforcement.** Pope County then sent a corrective action notice to these landowners who have 11 months to comply. Of the 9 landowners, we had 4 landowners follow up with Pope SWCD to reseed their buffers in the spring. We have 2 landowners that are working with DNR on determinations, 1 landowner is working with the Pope County Ditch Inspector on cleaning the ditch in the spring and reseeding, and 2 landowners have begun encumbering fines.

If you have any other questions regarding this program and law give our office a call at 320-634-5327. You can visit with Holly or Nicole.

## Congratulations to Jim and Karen Barchenger 2022 Pope County Outstanding Conservationists



*The Barchengers were honored at a Commissioner Meeting in December and the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting. Pictured above are the Pope Commissioners and Pope SWCD Staff and Board Members with the Barchengers: Keith Nygaard, Randy Mitteness, Karen and Jim Barchenger, Nan Haggerty, Holly Kovarik, Larry Lindor, Cody Roghan, Tom Talle, Randy Pederson Back Row: Paul Gerde and Gordy Wagner*

## ROSHOLT RESEARCH FARM UPDATES

Nitrogen and water quality research are ongoing studies at the Rosholt Research Farm in Westport. Research is conducted May till November at the farm. One study 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 to determine effects on yields. A comparison study is happening at the U of M Sand Plain Research Farm in Becker, Minnesota.

Lysimeters, buried approximately 4 feet deep, are used to extract water from below the root zone using a vacuum pump. Analysis of the 200 water samples for nitrates are done at Rosholt weekly using a spectrophotometer.

Additional studies included: a variable rate irrigation study of nitrate analysis from Becker and Belgrade sites; a nitrous oxide study where readings were taken three times a week at 45 locations throughout both corn and soybean research plots; and a study of soil moisture using a neutron probe, taking five different depth moisture readings weekly at 72 pipes/locations in corn plots.

There is also an ongoing study that involves the perennial Kernza grass. Kernza has deep roots that can capture and utilize nitrates before they leach into the groundwater. Sixty lysimeters with syringe sample tubes were used to pull weekly water samples for nitrate analysis.

A Rosholt Field Day was held on August 18<sup>th</sup> at the Rosholt Farm with 60 people attending. Presenters from the University of Minnesota spoke on the three main research trials that were conducted at the farm involving nitrogen, irrigation, and Kernza.

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 Research Farm. If you would like to learn more about the farm and research visit our website at [www.popeswcd.org](http://www.popeswcd.org).



***Pictured left to right: Pulling water samples from lysimeters; Rosholt field day presentation; strip tilling sections of the Kernza plots***



**Rosholt  
Research Farm  
Project Partners**



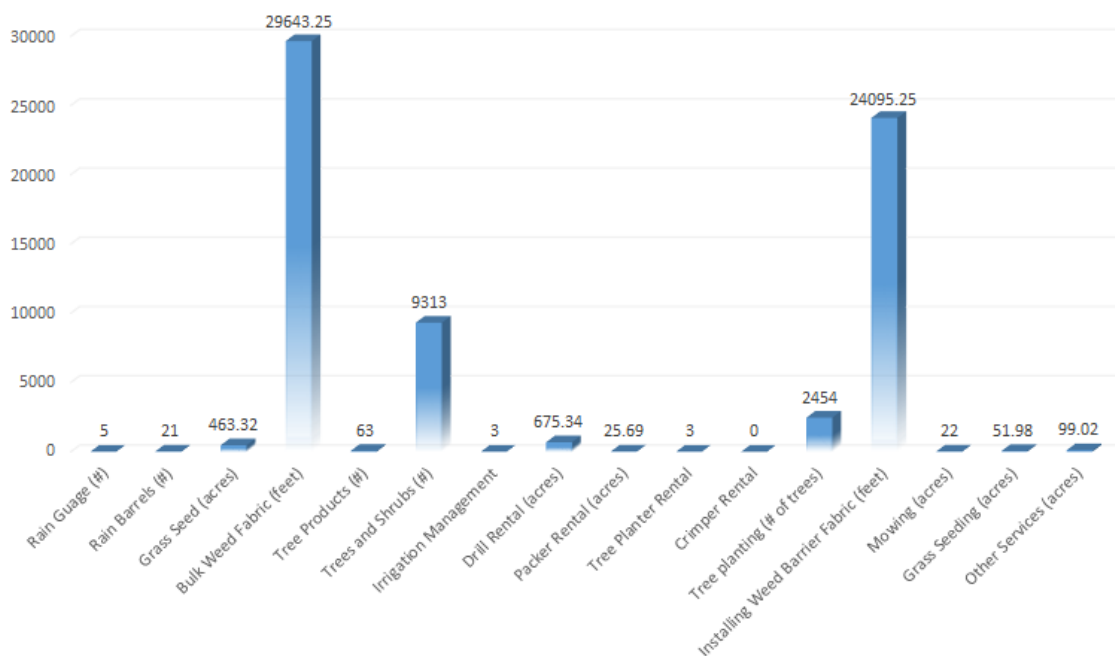


## WALK IN ACCESS PROGRAM

Pope county is fortunate enough to have the Walk-In Access (WIA) Program. This program pays landowners for allowing the public to hunt on their land. Hunting is allowed from September 1 to May 31, for hunters who have purchased a WIA permit. Land must be maintained to have native vegetation that benefits wildlife. **In 2022 Pope SWCD worked with 1 landowner to enroll 1 new site of 32 acres into the program. Pope county now has 3 WIA locations, 2 located in Gilchrist township and 1 located in Langhei township. In total there are 258 acres of WIA land for hunters to enjoy in our county.** If anyone is interested in enrolling into the WIA program and opening your land to hunters in need please contact Nicole at 320-634-5327 to learn more.



**2022 SALES PROGRAM BY ITEM QUANTITY**



### USDA-NRCS 2022 Activities:

Environmental Quality Incentive Program	4,660 acres	\$495,000
Conservation Stewardship Program	12,700 acres	\$405,000

### USDA-FSA 2022 Activities:

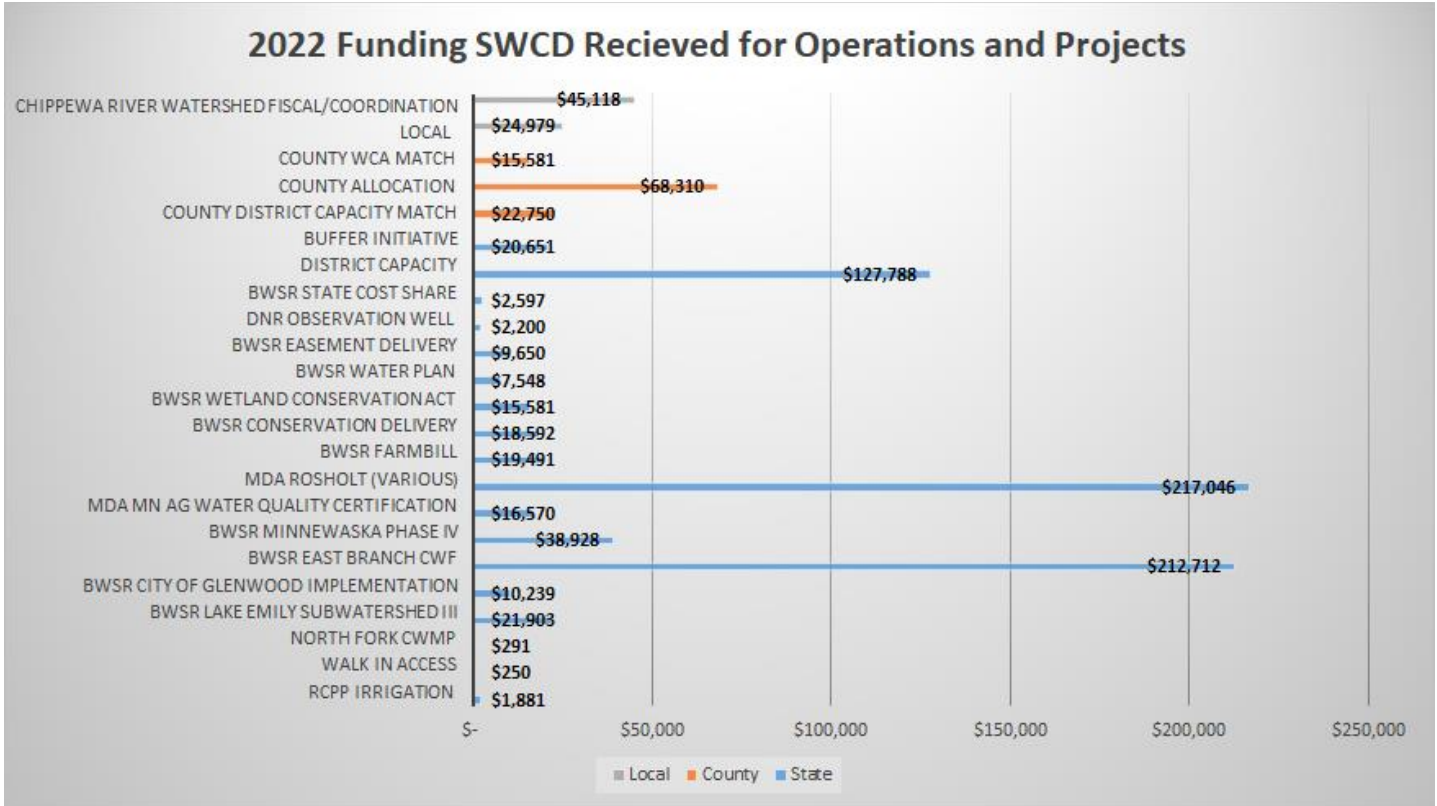
Conservation Reserve Program Total Rental Payments	\$1,938,859
Conservation Reserve Program new or reenrolled contracts	97 count



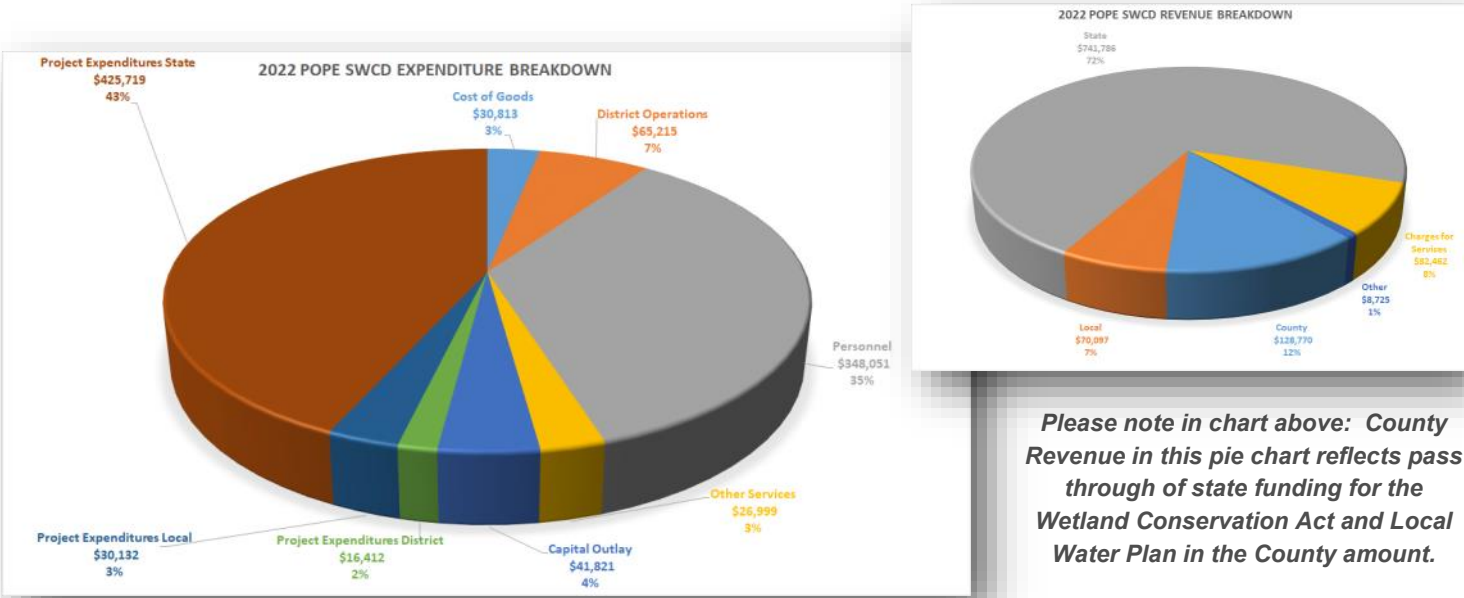
*This information has been provided by our federal partner agencies on work completed in 2022 and the financial contributions made for programs and projects for the benefit of the citizens in Pope County. They administer additional programs but these are reported here as they do intersect with the work 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 2022 will be made available once the audit is complete.



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.







# Pollinators, Pints & Popcorn

*Door Prizes & Activities For the Whole Family!*

**MARCH 27 @ 5 PM**  
**TALKING WATERS BREWING CO.**  
MONTEVIDEO, MN



**APRIL 3 @ 5 PM**  
**ROLLING FORKS VINEYARDS**  
GLENWOOD, MN



## Guest Speaker Karin Jokela

*Learn about planting habitat that is beautiful, functional and engaging!*

Karin is a pollinator conservation planner with the Xerces Society, which is a science-based nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats.

She is based in Southeast Minnesota where she works with NRCS and SWCD staff in Minnesota and Wisconsin to provide information about habitat restoration and pollinator-friendly farm management practices to farmers and landowners.



## 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.

April 18	Board Meeting
May 16	Board Meeting
June 20	Board Meeting
July 18	Board Meeting



**2022 SWCD BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

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



**SWCD STAFF**

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