**Tree of the Quarter:** Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) is a coniferous species of tree native to the western United States, including western North Dakota. It is a small to medium sized tree, growing 20’ to 40’ tall with a crown of 12’-20’. The leaves stay green all year, with very little winter variation. The Rocky Mountain Juniper reproduces by small berry-like cones. They are winter hardy to Zone 3, and offer excellent winter wind protection. The Rocky Mountain Juniper is very adaptable to pH levels, tolerating levels from 6 to 8, as well as high salt levels. They prefer moist, well-drained soils, but once established, can tolerate drought conditions. The Rocky Mountain Juniper is an excellent tree for farmstead windbreaks, wildlife plantings and field windbreaks. The SCD offers this tree, both for machine planting and hand-plant trees.

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**Mark your Calendars!**

The annual Cass County Soil Conservation District’s Ladies Ag night will be held on Thursday, March 15th at the Fargo Air Museum in Fargo. Join us for a fun and exciting night celebrating women in agriculture. The crowd favorite Raffle Baskets will be back, along with door prizes. The always delicious meal will be served, along with cupcakes for dessert. Our speaker for the evening will be Dr. Adnan Akyuz, the North Dakota State Climatologist. He will discuss the wonders of North Dakota weather. Dr. Akyuz is a wonderfully informative and humorous speaker, and he will deliver a talk you won’t soon forget! It will be a great evening to celebrate women in agriculture, and you can join us by calling 701-282-2157 ext 3 or by emailing Amy at amy.cole@nd.nacdnet.net. Seating is limited to 300 people, so RSVP today! We hope to see you there!

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**District Staff**

Jeff Miller—Operations Coordinator  
Tony Peterson—District Technician  
Eric Dahl—Watershed Coordinator  
Amy Cole—District Clerk  
Ashley Fisk—Urban Conservationist

**NRCS Staff**

Josh Monson—District Conservation  
Matt Shappell—Soil Conservationist  
Matt Waclawik—Wetlands Specialist  
Lucas Schmiesing—Soil Conservationist  
Blake Johnson—Agriculture Engineer

**District Supervisors**

Terry Hoffmann—Wheatland  
Brad Kellerman—West Fargo  
Curt Knutson—Page  
Brooks Whitmore—Page  
Warren Solberg—Horace

http://cassscd.org  
Check us out on Facebook!
The District worked closely with our partners NRCS and FSA in setting up CRP, EQIP, and CSP contracts that involved either tree plantings or grass plantings. We would like to thank all the cooperators in the county for giving the District the opportunity to apply conservation to their land. The District assisted these cooperators in planting over 180,000 LF of trees and installed over 153,000 LF of weed barrier. Almost 72,000 trees were planted in Cass County in 2017.

Our Eco-Ed outdoor educational program was held at Brewer Lake in September. 152 students from Central Cass School enjoyed the beautiful weather while rotating through the five stations: Water Quality, Woodlands, Prairie, Wetlands, and Soils. The Red River Zoo gave a wonderful presentation utilizing a parrot, porcupine and a snake.

Maple River Watershed Project Phase II (Buffalo Creek) is open for sign-up and we are continuously accepting cost-share applications for management practices in the Buffalo Creek Watershed. This is the final year of the Buffalo Creek Project so if you are interested in cost share, be sure to sign up for the 2018 growing season. Practices include livestock management, cover crop, grass and tree establishment, septic system renovations, and more. Interest in cover crop continues to grow and is very popular in our watershed project. New in 2017 we offered a county-wide cover crop program (Cass County Cover Crop Project) for first time cover crop users. This program will also be available in 2018 and is offered on a first come first serve basis. We continue to work with our 319 sponsored cover crop and no-till demonstration sites, so stay tuned for 2018 tour and workshop dates.

The Urban Conservation program continues to expand. We took on many great projects throughout our community and held several community educational workshops including the construction of rain barrels and compost tumblers, pallet gardens and straw bale gardens. The Pocket Prairie Initiative, Community Garden Grant, and Many events were attended throughout summer including the Fargo Police Picnic, Midwest Kidfest, and the 4th grade Water Festival.

In celebration of Arbor Day and Earth Week, the District, along with many community partners including Fargo Forestry, Fargo Park District, and River Keepers, hosted three community events. “Plant it For the Planet” was held at the Red River Zoo. “Reforest the Red”, our largest event, allowed community residents to participate in tree planting along the Red River to enhance the riparian forest. The Arbor Day Celebration was a hit with local middle school students where they spent half a day planting 100 trees. All events were well attended and over 10,000 trees were planted! All events are planned again and we are looking for volunteers to help make them successful in 2018.

In March, the District held the annual Ladies Ag Night at Hagge’s Bar and Grill in Mapleton. The event featured Greg and Lisa Cook, owners of 4e Winery, as the keynote speakers. Ladies Ag Night is a special event to show appreciation for all the ladies that are involved with agriculture in Cass County.

The District participated in the Ag in the Classroom program which was held at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds. This event educates approximately 2000 Cass County 4th graders on various agriculture and conservation practices.

We had a booth at the Home and Garden Show at the Fargodome. During this event, we meet many new people and discuss with them about the many services the District has to offer.

We had a booth at the Big Iron Farm Show. Big Iron gives us a great opportunity to discuss soil conservation with the producers that stop by the booth. During the show we also displayed our tree planting equipment at our shop, which is located on the Red River Valley Fairgrounds.

Fargo Forum featured the District in articles on the Pocket Prairie Initiative and rain barrels.

All in all, it was a very productive and busy year. We look forward to working with producers and organizations to help Cass County continue to make strides in conservation!

"The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now"
Conservation Quote of the Quarter:

“We are part of the earth and it is part of us ... What befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth.”

Chief Seattle

Spring Workshops

We are excited to announce, new for 2018, our Pollinator Habitat Workshop. In this workshop you will discover the many benefits of a pollinator habitat, and learn how to transform a section of your property into a beautiful prairie garden! Focus is on what constitutes as a pollinator habitat, the importance of landscaping with native plants, and the instructions for installing one from start to finish. Participants will leave with a start of their individualized design plan, and a pollinator friendly kit to get started. In addition, we will continue with our popular Make Your Own Rain Barrel workshops and our Make Your Own Compost Tumbler workshops. If interested please register by calling Moorhead Community Education 218-284-3400 or by visiting their online registration. For more information on any of the workshops please call our office at 701.282.2157 x3.

Annual Spring FSA Reminders

If your bank account information has changed, please let the NRCS office know. Incorrect information will delay your payments.

If you are adding or losing land, please contact the FSA and NRCS office so we can update our records

If you have a new contract, please do not start any practices prior to the contract being funded.

Prior to installation of any practices that are currently in a contract, please contact the NRCS Field Office staff to make sure the design is complete.

If you have any program questions or would like more information on programs available through the NRCS office, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Make Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop: $74 (with partial reimbursement for Cass County residents):
- April 24, 2018 A Moorhead Park 6-8 PM
- May 9, 2018 A Fargo Park 6-8 PM
- May 21, 2018 A West Fargo Park 6-8 PM

Make Your Own Compost Tumbler Workshop: $69 (with partial reimbursement for Cass County residents):
- May 1, 2018 A Moorhead Park 6-8 PM
- May 16, 2018 A Fargo Park 6-8 PM
- May 31, 2018 A West Fargo Park 6-8 PM

Pollinator Habitat Workshop: $19
- March 27, 2018 Moorhead, MN

Upcoming Events

January 15th — Martin Luther King Day: Office Closed
January 16th — Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office
February 19th — President's Day: Office Closed
February 20th — Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office
February 23-25 - Home and Garden Show: Fargodome
February 27-March 2nd — Ag in the Classroom: RRVF
March 20th — Board Meeting: Fargo Field Office
March 15th — Ladies Ag Night: Fargo Air Museum
Drive around the countryside on a windy day in the late fall or early spring, before or after the snow has melted, and chances are good your vehicle will be pelted with small grains of airborne soil particles. “We just need a shot of rain or snow” is the common comment I hear when this happens. Other than making it tough to see when driving, why is soil erosion bad?

It’s easy to cite scientific sources on how the nutrients of the soil are lost, how the soil biota is compromised, and how the soil horizons are being depleted. That’s all true, but what does that mean to farmers, ranchers, rural landowners, and even urbanities?

If you are a farmer, loss of topsoil will directly affect your bottom line. Nutrients applied via fertilizer literally blow away like dollars in the wind. Topsoil is not replaceable, once it’s gone, it’s gone. The highly productive O and A soil horizons are lost, leaving the less viable B horizon subsoil. Of course, this soil can be farmed productively, but it requires greater inputs. In this day of low profit margins, you surely don’t want to be spending more money on inputs than absolutely necessary.

More expensive crop production will invariably lead to higher prices for food. Even if you don’t farm or live in a rural area, higher food prices will affect your pocketbook. Soil erosion has an affect on everyone.

How can we prevent soil erosion? Trees and perennial grass will hold the soil and prevent erosion. Grazing is beneficial to the land, but take care not to overgraze. Removing too much vegetative growth can promote erosion. On farm land, no-till or minimal-till will hold more soil in place than conventional tillage. On heavily worked, raw ground there is nothing to prevent the soil from moving. Cover crops also keep a vegetative layer on the land during the non-growing season. If tillage is used, tilling in the spring rather than the fall can reduce soil loss in the fall and winter.

In some areas of Cass County, we have lost half of our topsoil in the last 60 years. If soil erosion and loss isn’t stopped, the potential exists for the permanent loss of topsoil for the next generation. If we hope to continue to have a robust agricultural economy in North Dakota, along with leaving a healthy landscape for the next generation, soil erosion has to be reduced. The greatest legacy, as stewards of the land, that we can leave for future generations is a vibrant and healthy Earth.
**Conservation-Grade Fruit Orchard**

Small orchards can be a delight to have on your property. Unlike an annual garden, orchards, once they are producing, will fruit for many years. However, having a successful orchard is much more than just planting a few trees.

The trees available through the District are non-grafted conservation grade. The non-grafted fruit trees are in their native state, meaning they are grown from seed and not hybridized. Wild plums, for instance, have fruit that is small and variable. While not bred for fruit production, they are prolific and delicious. In addition, there aren't royalties paid on the non-grafted trees, so the cost is much lower.

Grafted trees are selectively bred and have 2 parts. The top portion, which determines variety, is called a scion. The scion is attached to a rootstock, commonly a crabapple species. This means if you try to grow a grafted tree from seed, the tree that grows will not be from the scion but the rootstock. Because of the added work in the lab and through breeding, grafted trees are much more expensive than non-grafted.

Non-grafted trees can grow excellent fruit, ranging from astringent chokecherry that makes delicious jams and wine, to juneberry, which are scrumptious right off the tree. The success of conservation fruit tree planting can be increased by taking the steps below:

- **Weed control:** Weeds can be controlled by tilling, hand-pulling, fabric or the granulated chemical Casoron.

- **Protection:** Deer, rabbits and a host of other critters can easily kill a tree. Tree tubes or wire cages protect the tree. For larger plantings, fencing is often needed.

- **Water:** During dry spells, watering can be the difference between a healthy tree and a tree struggling to survive.

- **Pruning:** Once the tree is established, pruning enables fruiting to occur on “new” wood. Pruning also removes weak branches that can break when under a heavy fruit load.

Conservation-grade trees are a great choice for a small backyard fruit orchard. The District has a wide variety of fruit hand plant trees available for purchase.
All programs and services of the Cass County Soil Conservation District are offered on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or handicap. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.