

Cass County Soil Conservation District

Winter Conservation News

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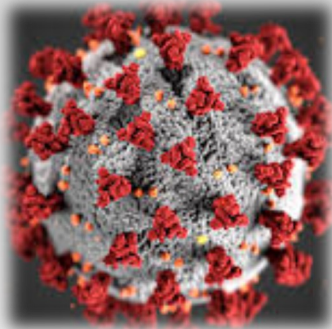


Tree of the Quarter: Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) is a very large pine tree native to far southwestern North Dakota. Second only to the sugar pine in height, the Ponderosa Pine has long bright green needles. When mature, the bark is yellow to orange with broad plates and black crevices. Growing at a medium rate of 12" to 18" inches per year, the Ponderosa Pine is a great choice for field and farmstead windbreaks. Adaptable to a wide range of soil conditions, this tree is drought tolerant once mature.

The taproot of a the Ponderosa Pine is deep, for a conifer, making it quite wind-resistant. Many species of birds and small mammals enjoy the seeds. Ponderosa Pine are available through the Tree Store in conservation grade stock and can be planted in machine plantings as well.

**Check us out at
cassscd.org or on
Facebook!**

COVID and Conservation



As the pandemic changed life last Spring, the District has adapted. While it made it nearly impossible to do education and outreach, we managed to get out our message of conservation nonetheless. We also aren't letting it slow us down from putting conservation on the ground. While our office is closed to the public, we can still plan your tree planting, grass seeding, urban conservation project or anything else through email, telephone calls or site visits. Together, we can work through COVID and continue to get conservation on the ground!

District Staff

Jeffrey Miller—Director

Amy Cole—Office Manager

Eric Dahl—Soil and Water Resources Mgr

Tony Peterson—Programs Manager

NRCS Staff

Josh Monson—District Conservationist

Matt Shappell—Soil Conservationist

Matt Waclawik—Wetlands Specialist

Blake Johnson—Agriculture Engineer

Paul Flahave—Designated Conservationist

Tim Cogger—Program Assistant

Amy Bauroth—Heartland Secretary

District Supervisors

Terry Hoffmann—Wheatland

Brad Kellerman—West Fargo

Curt Knutson—Page

Warren Solberg—Horace

Annual Report: 2020 was yet another great year for conservation in Cass County!

- ✓ The District worked closely with our partners NRCS and FSA in setting up EQIP and CSP contracts that involved either tree plantings or grass plantings. In addition, the **Cass County Windbreak Planting Initiative (CWPI)** continue to be very popular. 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 **160,000 LF** of trees and installed over **145,000 LF** of weed barrier. Almost **61,000 trees and shrubs** were planted in Cass County in 2020.
- ✓ Both no-till drills saw use and we planted over **3,100 acres** of perennial grasses and forbs, cover crops and alfalfa in Cass County in 2020.
- ✓ Our **Eco-Ed** outdoor educational program was a casualty of COVID and was not held in 2020.
- ✓ The **Maple River Watershed Project** is open for sign-up and we are continuously accepting cost-share applications for management practices in the Maple River Watershed. This is the third year of the Project so if you are interested in cost-share, be sure to sign up for the 2021 growing season. Practices include livestock management, cover crop, grass and tree establishment, septic system renovations, and more.
- ✓ 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. The Pocket Prairie Initiative, Community Garden Grant, and Pollinator plantings continue to be popular. We are continuously accepting applications, so contact us today!
- ✓ The District's annual **Ladies Ag Night** was a casualty of COVID and not held in 2020.
- ✓ The District participated in the **Living Ag 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.
- ✓ The District had a booth at the **Home and Garden Show** at the FargoDome. During this event, we meet many new people and discuss the services the District has to offer.
- ✓ The District 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 displayed our tree planting equipment at our shop at the fairgrounds.
- ✓ District Director Jeffrey Miller began writing a column on conservation for *The Good Life* magazine (<https://issuu.com/thegoodlifemensmag>)
- ✓ The District planted **Little Free Garden #226** at the office entrance.
- ✓ The District partnered with Fargo Parks and Riverkeepers for ReForest the Red.
- ✓ District Director Jeffrey Miller spoke at Nature of the North's "Nature Night" in August.
- ✓ Morken Farm, Amenia, was awarded the 2020 Achievement Award.
- ✓ The District hosted our annual Conservation Farming Workshop at Hagge's in March.
- ✓ The District presented at Fargo Vocational Training Center (VTC) on a variety of topics.
- ✓ The "Animal Adaptations" presentation continues to be popular with students.

Quote of the Quarter:

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

Anne Bradstreet

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!

Winter Salt and Water Impacts

Snowflakes falling from an iron sky can look lovely on postcards and movies, but for modern life to continue, the roadways need to be cleared of the white stuff. On both roadways and around homes and in cities, salt is often used to give the melting process a kick-start. The freezing point of salt is lower than pure water, helping melt snow and ice. Unfortunately, once the salt completes its job, it gets carried away in runoff and enters our streams, rivers, lakes and sloughs. It has been estimated that over 22 million tons of salt are spread on roads across the nation.

What happens when all that salt ends up in our water? The salt dissolves, splitting into chloride and sodium ions. Of the two elements, the chloride is of greater concern as it is more easily transported in dissolved form. High chloride levels interfere with the uptake of natural salt for aquatic organisms. This in turn can decrease the survival rates of nearly every species in an effected waterbody. In extreme cases, high levels of salt can affect the oxygen levels in a waterbody as well. In the shallow, eutrophic lakes that characterize most of North Dakota, this can lead to winterkill.

It's not just water that's affected by salt runoff. Too much salt along streets and roads can create saline deserts. The salt inhibits the uptake of water in trees and plants, leaving behind a dry, inhospitable soil.

Thankfully, there are ways to reduce salt on the roadways. It can be blended in with sand, reducing the overall amount of salt needed. Salt can be applied prior to a forecasted storm, preventing the precipitation from binding to the surface. Finally, alternative binders are being used as well. Sugarcane molasses, beet juice and cheese brine have been mixed with salt successfully. While it doesn't totally eliminate the use of salt on the roadways, reductions in salt runoff can have a huge impact on the world around us.



Upcoming Events

December 25th— **Christmas Day:** Office Closed

February 15th— **Presidents' Day:** Office Closed

January 1st— **New Year's Day:** Office Closed

February 16th— **Board Meeting:** West Fargo Shop

January 19th— **Board Meeting:** West Fargo Shop

January 18th— **MLK Day:** Office Closed

The Color of Winter



Once the riot of color of Autumn falls to the ground, the color of Winter sets in. For those unaccustomed to a prairie Winter, there isn't much for the eye. Muted shades of white and grey stretch as far as one can see. By looking closer, however, the color of winter reveals itself. Redosier dogwood, growing near sloughs and rivers, show a vivid red, stark against the snow. Planted pine trees, both Scotch and Ponderosa, add a splash of green and orange. Softer edges abound as well. Whitetail deer move effortlessly through the snow, their brown winter coats keeping them warm against the chill. On a warm, sunny day, look closely in your fresh footprints. What appears to be specks of dirt may very well be snow fleas. It is quite

unexpected to see insects in the depth of a North Dakota winter.

The cold temperatures and snow should not stop us from enjoying the outdoors. The fresh, cold air feels wonderful and is refreshing after spending so much time indoors. Bundle up and get outside, and embrace the color of winter.



Spring 2021

It's not too late to plan your Spring tree planting! Depending on the practice, there may even be cost-share available! Just looking for hand-plants for your property? The Tree Store is now **OPEN!** Winter is the perfect time to plan a Pollinator Plot or Pocket Prairie as well. Call or email us today and let's get a plan together!

Pollinator Plots in Winter

Pollinator plots are one of the last things we think about in Winter. Beautiful blooming prairie flowers and grasses are part of the spring, summer and fall. But the winter months? Our wide variety of pollinating insects spend the winter in a wide variety of ways. While some species, such as Monarch butterflies, migrate south, the majority do not. Some species overwinter as adults, while others do as larvae. Some species burrow in the soil and leaf litter, and others tunnel into plants and trees. Managing a pollinator planting is important for those insects that spend the winter.



There are a few easy things you can do to provide habitat for overwintering pollinators. They include leaving stalks of large forbs standing. Bees and some species of beetles can burrow into the thick stems. Undisturbed leaf and grass litter allows burrowing insects to spend the winter in a sheltered location.

Even if you don't have a pollinator plot on your property, there are things you can do to provide crucial winter habitat. While many urban dwellers prefer a "clean" look in their yard, allowing leaves, fallen branches and other debris to remain on the landscape over winter will allow for a wide variety of bees, butterflies, moths and other pollinators and beneficial insects to have a place to spend the cold winter months.

Once the snow is gone and Spring is creeping across the land, the desiccated forbs and grasses can be removed to allow for fresh new growth. Maintaining and protecting our pollinators is truly a year-round endeavor.



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You can now pay your bill online! Click **PAY MY BILL** on the homepage and enjoy the convenience!

STEWARDSHIP FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

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.


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