

Beadle County Conservation District (No.29)

History from 1969 publication:

Beadle County was surveyed and the boundaries established in 1872 by General Beadle. Only a few settlers came before 1879. Most of the desirable land was claimed during the next two or three years.

The early settlers found a land that was quite level to gently undulating, except along the river and creeks where it was a little rough, but not bad, and all was covered with a heavy growth of grass.

These native grasses were mixed prairie grasses in an area of transition from the tall prairie grasses to the east and the short grasses to the west. The tall prairie grasses occupy the bottom land and better soils where more moisture is available. Short grasses are found on ridge tops and thinner soils. Blue grama and western wheatgrass constitute the major portion of the vegetative cover found in the grass areas. Some other native grasses of importance are needle grasses, blue stems, buffalo grass and sedges.

The James River flows through the county from north to south and has several creeks flowing into it from both east and west. These, along with springs, supplied ample water. As the settlers came, shallow wells were dug for more convenient sources of water. Some years later the deep artesian wells were dug; many of these are still in use. Since the county is in a limited rainfall area, supplemental water is needed.

Beadle County comes within the area of moderate to deep black top soils developed under grass cover in a sub-humid climate. These soils are under laid for the most part by friable sub-soils, usually containing lime accumulation. The most common soils are the Barnes and Lamoure series, with a few scattered areas of Fargo, Bearden and Beadle.

There is a considerable variation in the soils of the county. There is quite an area of sandy soil extending north from Wolsey through the county. Most of the remainder of the soil is loamy with many variations and some hard pan areas. At the time that the Conservation District was organized, many soils had been subjected to moderate to severe wind erosion.

The land was broken out and farmed, as in all new areas, with mostly a series of grain crops at first. Wheat yielded as much as 40 bushels per acre. Very little corn or cultivated crops were grown before World War I. But soon after that corn became an important crop, especially on the lighter soils.

After some 40 or 50 years of farming, the humus content of the soil became less and the soil structure began to break down and the soil became fine and powdery. Then when the dry years of the 30's came, wind erosion became a serious problem and worse each year. The fields blew badly. The soil piled up in the fence rows and filled the road ditches. Crops blew out and anything the people did seemed to do no good. They became desperate and were not able to cope with the problem and sought help.

There was a growing realization that the people needed help. As the first effort, in 1935 and 1936, they organized voluntary conservation associations in the areas around Wolsey, Sheffield and Cavour. They held regular meetings, invited outside speakers, discussed their problems

and tried to work out solutions. It was through the efforts of these groups that they were able to secure help from the Soil Erosion Service and the C.C.C. Camp when these agencies started operating. The camp supplied labor and the Soil Erosion Service supplied the technical help and some heavy equipment to level the sand dunes and hummocks, as well as build some dams.

Then when the South Dakota Soil Conservation District Law became available, the people were ready to take advantage of it. Three townships in the northeast corner of Beadle County decided to join with three townships in Clark County and four in Spink County and organize the Carpenter Soil Conservation District. This was done in 1940, with Joshua J. Hofer as a Beadle County supervisor.

During the fall of 1941, many of the farmers from the western part of the county requested that the county Extension agent conduct meetings and explain the program. As a result, the State Soil Conservation Committee conducted a hearing on February 17, 1942, at which it was definitely shown that the people wanted a conservation district. The referendum was held July 24, with a favorable vote of 340 to 75. Thus, the West Beadle Conservation District was formed, consisting of the western thirteen townships of the County.

On September 2, 1942, three supervisors were elected to complete the organization. The first supervisors, all farmers, were: B.A. Radcliffe, Wessington, Chairman; Harry Martens, Wessington, Vice-Chairman; W.A. Vollenweider, Hitchcock, Treasurer; Louis Braun, Wolsey; and Joe Curtis, Virgil.

The first work, consisting of grass seeding and planting of farmstead windbreaks, was accomplished in April of 1943. The first trees were planted on the farms of H.R. Marshall, Jens Olsen, Golda Hamilton and C.A. McFarling.

There were 54 applications for work in the first year. At the end of the year, fifteen farm plans had been completed, six were partially completed and 27 applicants were on file.

During the first year, the SCS provided 1600 pounds of good quality crested wheat grass seed. 4500 trees and shrubs were provided, with farmers supplying an additional 1900 trees.

Equipment for the work was made available by the Soil Conservation Service. Charges were made for the use of the equipment based on the operation and maintenance cost. Equipment available was: Dempster subsurface tiller, M&M unit carrier and tree planter, tow row lister with damming and planting attachments, McCormick Deering W-30 tractor on rubber, seed stripper, cultipacker and two old Peoria drills.

In 1946, the remaining townships in the eastern half of the county were added to the Conservation District. In 1961, the Carpenter Conservation District was dissolved and the three Beadle County townships from that Conservation District were added to the original West Beadle Conservation District and the name changed to the Beadle County Conservation District.

Arrangements were made whereby this east part of the county should be represented on the board and so Henry Hein, Adam Reinschmidt and Merritt Fenner were chosen to serve as assistant supervisors until the terms of others had expired.

Some of the problems facing the Conservation District were wind erosion; pastures overgrazed; too much land unprotected; low rainfall; and grasshoppers.

The supervisors proposed to attack these problems through the use of 1) building dams and dugouts in pastures; 2) water spreading systems and grassed waterways; irrigation where suitable water is available; 3) stubble mulch tillage; 4) strip cropping, both contour and straight;) 5) reseed both pastures and cropland; 6) use more grass and legumes in the rotations; 7) plant shelterbelts and farmstead windbreaks.

At the close of 1964, the Conservation District had the following accomplishments:

Conservation cropping systems	162,566	acres
Contour strip cropping	180	acres
Terraces	18	miles
Grassed waterways	225	acres
Stubble mulch	4,981	acres
Wind strip cropping	1,500	acres
Land leveling	387	acres
Proper range uses	22,100	acres
Stock water developments	1,500	units
Pasture plantings	189,000	acres
Pasture proper use	50,000	acres
Farmstead windbreak plantings	3,735	acres

These additional people were active in the promotion of the Conservation District organization: Art Haugen, Virgil; Ernest Ely, Wolsey; Earl Fritzsche, Wessington; Robert Jungemann, Wolsey; Carl Larson, Wolsey; Floyd and Dewey Schiltz, Wessington; Ed Martin, Cavour; Merritt Fenner, Iroquois; and Herb Costian, Huron.

The following additional men have served as supervisor: Leo Ruppel, Alpena; Olaf Boe, Wolsey; A.H. Ingle, Cavour; Eli Walter, Huron; Sam Walter, Carpenter; Elvin Guthmiller, Wolsey; and Art Olson, Huron.

The 1969 supervisors were: Harry Martens, Wessington, Chairman; Elvin Guthmiller, Wolsey, Vice-Chairman; Art Olson, Huron, Treasurer; Philip J. Kobinger, Huron; Bernard Zell, Cavour; and Dick Fadgen, Huron, Secretary (County Agent).

Other secretaries have been: Leonard L. Ladd, 1942-1944; Gale Peppers, 1944-1960; R.J. Gibson, 1960-1962; Merlin Hodgson, 1962-1965.

The SCS personnel assigned to the Conservation District were: Bjorn Davidson, Work Unit Conservationist; Joe F. Ausan, Work Unit Conservationist; Mike Ahern, Work Unit Conservationist; Gary Kruse, Work Unit Conservationist; Philip Kobriger, Conservation Technician; Floyd Kallenberger, Conservation Technician; Vernon Moxon, Soil Scientist; Harry James, Soil Scientist; and Cleo Treadwell, Soil Conservationist.

Updated information provided in 2012:

Previous to the autumn of 1950, the Soil Conservation Service owned heavy dirt moving equipment which was loaned to the Conservation District for use on their projects. The Service maintained a repair shop in Huron where this equipment was maintained in good working order.

Then in 1950, the Service decided to no longer own this equipment so they granted it to the

conservation districts and closed their repair shop. That posed a repair and maintenance problem. The Service retained cars, pickups and light trucks, necessary for their own use, and they needed a place to repair. And the conservation districts, to whom the heavy equipment was granted, needed a place to maintain and repair that equipment.

The State Association became interested in the problem, along with other conservation districts. The matter was discussed quite widely. On October 29, 1950, the Beadle County Conservation District supervisors held a meeting for the purpose of considering the possibility of setting up an area repair and maintenance shop. On the next day, a meeting was held at Huron and attended by representatives from Sanborn, Spink, Hand, Clark, Carpenter and Beadle Conservation Districts, who discussed the matter of the Area Heavy Equipment Committee investing in a fund to construct and operate such a building and shop. They decided to add \$2,000 to the fund.

Monies pledged for the building and equipment included:	\$14,000.00
SD Association of Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisors	\$12,000.00
Area III Heavy Equipment Committee	<u>2,000.00</u>

On October 30, 1950, the Beadle County Conservation District entered into an agreement with the South Dakota Fair Board, whereby the Board would grant a perpetual easement on a piece of ground approximately 250 feet by 350 feet, located in the southeast corner of the Fair Grounds. The easement specified the use and management of the area.

A contract was signed with the Huron Steel Structures to build a quonset-type building 32' x 132'. It was soon discovered a wider building was needed, so a new contract was executed, calling for a building 40' x 120'. The building provided a repair shop in the south end and a state shop in the north end, each heated, and with a large unheated storage area between the two.

The easement provides that the area shall be fenced and specifies other uses. It may be used as a healing bed for tree planting stock; a demonstration plot to demonstrate the various types of grasses, trees and shrubs, which would be desirable for planting in this area. A portion of the land could also be used for storage of vehicles and other equipment such as tractors, scrapers, tillage implements and other equipment and supplies used in the conservation district programs.

On February 5, 1951, the Beadle County Soil Conservation District entered into a lease agreement with the U.S.A. for the use of certain shop and storage space in the building at a rental fee of \$40.00 per month. This lease was renewed in 1958 and again in 1962.

Beadle Conservation District (BCD) has maintained tree planting as the main service since 1969. The amount of acres planted has varied over the years, from as little as 28 acres to as high as 262 acres per year. The amount of acres depended on moisture, too much or too little, and the cost-share programs available to the producers.

Over the years, as the need arose more services were added. In the late 60's and during the 70's, an inter-seeder was purchased and rented out to the producers. It was used to inter-seed alfalfa in the pastures. The condition of the tree stock before planting was a concern. An Army ambulance with an air conditioner was purchased to haul the cooled tree stock and pull the trailer for the tree planter. During the mid-90's, a Truax no-till drill was purchased with cooperation of Partners for Wildlife, Ducks Unlimited and the Conservation District. Several hundred acres of grass were planted. In the late 90's, a fabric machine was purchased to lay fabric over the new trees. The fabric has helped with tree survival especially in the dry years. Of

course the new services meant updating our tractors, trailers and pickups.

Supplying knowledge to others has always been very important to the board. Sponsoring the youth of the Conservation District through Arbor Day essays, poster contests, speech contests, range and conservation camps, water festivals for the 4th graders, giving a tree to each of the 3rd graders in the Conservation District on Arbor Day and 4-H conservation awards. The adult population wasn't forgotten. With Soil & Water Stewardship Week, materials are given to each church that wished to use them; someone is sponsored to go to the grazing school and to the Farmer and Rancher Short Course (formerly known as the Soil and Moisture Clinic). Over the years, tours were conducted within the Conservation District. The Conservation District, the Extension Service, various 4-H clubs and members of the service clubs would hold a yearly tour of the conservation practices in different parts of the county. The tour was preceded with a barbecued chicken dinner. For more than 20 years, this was very popular and the attendance was between 50- 60 people. Another attraction was a nature trail at the Isaak Walton Clubhouse in Huron, which was done with the Conservation District and SCS. The last couple of years a grasslands tour, cover crops demonstration plot, and conservation practices of a large dairy were highlighted. We have over time participated in the Town and Country and Farm and Home shows. For the last several years we have sponsored sale barn coffees at Magness Livestock Market and Bales Continental Commission. Another way the Conservation District has given back to the community was helping establish living snow fences along the county, state and township roads where snow load was tremendous. These snow fences were completed with the cooperation of federal, state, county and local funds. This project has saved many dollars in snow removal. Because of the dying trees on the State Fair grounds we established a tree bank where they could grow trees to replace the ones that needed replacing.

The Conservation District has held the sponsorship role of several grants for projects.

- Foster Creek- grasslands management,
- Lake Byron - shoreline stabilization
- Ravine Lake- grasslands management, dredging of the lake and shoreline stabilization
- Cain Creek- reestablishing grass and a grazing rotation, demonstration of tree and grass species.
- Shelterbelt Program-planting trees on ground that didn't qualify for other cost share programs.
- Establishing wells for livestock.
- Developing duck habitat.

No conservation district does things alone. Some of the organizations that we have partnered with over the years include: NRCS, FSA, US Fish and Wildlife, Partners for Wildlife, SD Game Fish and Parks, Pheasants Forever, Dept. of Ag, Ducks Unlimited, Parks and Recreation of Huron, Huron Chamber of Commerce (Ag Committee), Farmers Appreciation Banquet, Ag in The Classroom, 3rd grade Farm Tours, Extension service, State Fair board, Beadle County Commissioners and James River Water Development District.

Funding has always been difficult to obtain. Informing the members of the legislature of our cause was achieved by having suppers, appetizers, or coffee.

The Conservation District has maintained memberships with several organizations; Dakota Central RC&D, NACD, SDACD, SDACDE, auxiliary, and the Soil and Water Conservancy.

The day to day activities have been handled with either a conservation district secretary or a

manager. Some of the Conservation District staff has been Donna Fadgen, Ruth Gross, Deb Hurd, Sheri Womack, Judy Tschetter, and currently Conservation District Manager Paula R. Mom and Conservation Resource Technician Robin Viestenz.

The Conservation District is managed by a very dedicated board. The list of supervisors is as follows:

Supervisor	Service	Supervisor	Service
B.A. Radcliff, Wessington	1942-1949	Bernard Zell, Cavour	1968-1981
Harry Martens, Wessington	1949-1971	A.M. Haskell, Huron	1977-1992
W.A. Vollenweider, Hitchcock	1942-1958	Leslie Gross, Carpenter	1984-1986
Louie E. Braun, Wolsey	1942-1948	Gene Evensen, Virgil	1972-1992
Joe Curtis, Virgil	1942-1948	John McEnelly, Huron	1981-1985
Merrit Fenner, Iroquois	1949-1964	Byron Hanson, Huron	1984-1988
Olaf Boe, Wolsey	1949-1951	Gerald Bischoff, Huron	1986-1991
Arthur L. Olson, Huron	1949-1984	J.D. Lynd, Huron	1988-2012
A.J. Ingle, Cavour	1951-1960	Delwin Hofer, Carpenter	1991-
Leo Ruppel, Alpena	1956-1960	Todd Meyer, Huron	1992-1997
Sam F. Walter, Carpenter	1964-1968	Fran Fritz, Iroquois	1993-
Elvin Guthmiller, Wolsey	1961-	Randy Bauder, Alpena	1998-1998
Philip Kobriger, Huron	1968-1979	Scott Hamilton, Hitchcock	1999-2002
Craig Rearick, Hitchcock	2011-	Mark Goldammer, Huron	2013-

Beadle Conservation District has planted approximately 2980 acres of trees from 1969-2012.

The Conservation District has great hope for the future. With the planning of a new building and new services the Conservation District hopes to be here another 70 years. We wish all the conservation districts in the state a very happy 75th birthday.