

Walworth County Conservation District (No. 68)

History from 1969 publication:

Walworth County is located in north central South Dakota, with the west bordering on the Missouri River, the north bordering Campbell County, the east by Edmunds County and the south by Potter County. The drainage of the county is into the Missouri River, with the topography ranging from steep to undulating and rolling hills. Soils vary from clay to loams and silt loams.

There are 480,000 acres of land in Walworth County, which includes 20,672 acres of open water. Agriculture forms the economic base for the county. About 65% of the land is farm, 33% is pasture and range land and the remaining 2% encompass roads farmsteads, towns and other use. Presently there are about 279 farm operators in the county. No till farming practices encompass about 85% of the farming operations with the balance being conventional till.

The Walworth County Conservation District was organized in 1956, with the first board of supervisors chosen on November 21, 1956. The following men served as supervisors: Chairman Clarence Schumacher, Bowdle; Vice Chairman Otto Bieber, Java; Treasurer Dale Oxner, Selby; Richard Schlomer, Glenham and Walter Crawford, Akaska. These supervisors identified the county's concerns as:

- Lack of finances to buy equipment
- Wind and water erosion
- Overgrazing of pastures

Updated information provided 2012:

Fifty six years later, the Conservation District is experiencing some of the same problems.

Lack of state and county funding has impacted the Conservation District's operations. Decreased acres of planted trees hinders the Conservation District's overall finances.

Due to the implementation of no-till farming practices and continual windbreak planting throughout the county, wind and water erosion impacts have significantly decreased. Knowledge of pasture management has increased. With several NRCS programs in place to help promote pasture/range management, overgrazing of pastures has been held to a minimum.

The last decade has seen the Conservation District promote new farming practices. Use of no till drills, and seeding cover crop in the fall after the crop has been harvested are two factors helping reduce wind and water erosion.

Fabric was introduced to tree planting around 1990. The Conservation District started installing fabric in 2001. Tree tubes are sold to protect trees from rabbits and deer.

An Arbor Day essay contest is held amongst the 5th and 6th graders in Walworth County. It helps

promote important knowledge of trees to this age group. The Conservation District promotes the Annual speech contest sponsored by East River Electric. It helps bring conservation awareness to grades 9-12.

In 2006 the Conservation District celebrated their 50th anniversary. An open house and lunch was held at the tree shed.

In 2011 the Conservation District became involved in a special grant sponsored by the South Dakota Dept of Agriculture. We planted approximately 11 acres of trees and installed 4 solar pumps and one windmill using grant funds for cost share.

Some of the past supervisors/advisors were:

Marvin Wolf, Java; Urban Arbach, Hoven; Gene Sieck, Selby; Marlo Kuehl, Selby; Orville Stangl, Java; Herbert Moul, Mobridge; Leo Allendinger, Selby; George Turner, Glenham; William Sawinsky, Selby; Wayne Schnaible, Java; Walter Zabel, Selby; Thomas Hansen, Glenham; Irma Steder, Selby; Duane Karst, Hoven; Rudolph Kramer, Mobridge; Harlan Mertz, Java; Alfred Reuer, Hoven; Leo Vojta, Mobridge; Marlow Schaffer, Java; and Kurt Kaiser, Hoven.

Present supervisors are: Dave Witlock, Selby; Matt Popowski, Bowdle; Helen Zabel, Selby; Marlyn Thorstenson, Selby; and Bob Dreis, Hoven. Advisors are Doug Sieck, Selby; and Marty Raba, Java.