



# Excellence in Conservation: 2016 WD Employee of the Year

## January 2016 Snapshots

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The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is pleased to announce that Dan Wilkens, District Administrator for the Sand Hill Watershed District, has been honored as the 2015 Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year.

Dan was involved in the creation of the Sand Hill River Watershed District in 1975. He served as a manager until 1999 when he became the district administrator, the position he holds today. As a key public face of the district, Dan wears many hats. He has served in administrative, outreach, planning and coordination roles during his time with the district, working on agricultural drainage management, flood control, water quality, and other natural resource enhancement issues.

He is a leader on Red River Basin flood control and statewide drainage issues, traveling many miles within Minnesota and Manitoba to provide an agricultural, watershed, and Red River Basin perspective. He has served on a number of task forces and committees, including the Red River Water Management Board, the Red River Basin Commission, the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group, the International Red River Board, and the statewide stakeholder Drainage Work Group, of which he's been a member since it started in 2006.

Since 2011, Dan has led efforts within the watershed district to support a major project to help stabilize and improve the Sand Hill River. A shining example of collaboration and partnerships, this project includes eight funding sources, and many more partners on the federal, state, and local levels. The district has coordinated conservation practices and other projects for erosion control, water quality improvements, fish passage, and more. The result will be a more fishable, swimmable river system, with cleaner water, more suitable fish habitat and connectivity, and the restoration of a small watershed's legacy in the Red River Valley.

Throughout his career, Dan has been an active and committed representative of watershed districts in the Red River Basin. He's advocated for better flood control, agricultural drainage, and water quality improvements. His outreach efforts extend to RiverWatch, which gets high school students active in water quality monitoring and water management education. He understands the value of communication and compromise, and that different perspectives get heard.

"Dan's leadership is evident in the work of Sand Hill Watershed District," BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said. "He has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to the Red River Basin and the work he's done has impacts that extend throughout the state."

The Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year is awarded at the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts' convention, held annually in December.



*BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke (right), presents Sand Hill Watershed District Administrator Dan Wilkens (left) with the 2015 Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year award.*