



75 Years of Conservation: Root River SWCD Celebrates Milestone

November 2014 Snapshots



As one of state's first districts, the Root River Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has earned its place in Minnesota's conservation history. Organized in 1939 for 75 years the district has been a constant resource for local landowners. District staff and residents have worked in partnership to protect the fragile soils and steep slopes that are a hallmark of the region. While much has changed since the SWCD began, its commitment to land stewardship and the people of Houston County is as strong as ever.

Anne Selness, Root River SWCD District Manager, says the district's purpose has always been to provide assistance to cooperators in managing the natural resources on their land. As it was in 1939, partnerships are vital to the district's local conservation work in 2014.



"We work across the county and throughout our watersheds in an effort to reduce erosion and sedimentation, and improve water quality in our karst topography. That work is a result of a combined approach of information and education, technical and financial assistance from our federal, state, county and private agencies, with the continued support of the landowners we work with."

Pictured top: a stream bank stabilization on the Root River, 1939.

Pictured bottom, left to right: new District Manager Anne Selness, Supervisor Matt Feldmeier, BWSR Board Conservationist Steve Lawler, Supervisor Doug Meyer, Chair Loren Lapham, retiring District Manager Ron Meiners, and Supervisor Roger Stenhoff.

Root River SWCD has demonstrated a crucial ability to adapt to serve the needs of landowners. When disaster struck with the flooding of 2007, the SWCD's response became a blueprint for other agencies for how to provide effective leadership and aid to landowners during difficult times. In recent years, changes in agriculture and public policy have resulted in a shift away from small scale animal agriculture toward larger scale operations in the

county. The district has adapted, providing engineering, technical, and conservation assistance to help mitigate the effects of changing agricultural practices.

Those successes were celebrated in August of this year, as the community gathered to celebrate the SWCD's milestone anniversary. Stories were shared around the room, and it was clear that the district's conservation work impacted generations of Houston County residents. That's a powerful legacy, and a living one, as the work continues on behalf of generations to come.