



Ramsey
Conservation
District

2008

Comprehensive Plan

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**Ramsey Conservation District
Comprehensive Plan
July 2008 thru June 2010 Edition**

Approved by the Ramsey Conservation District Board of Supervisors
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I. RATIONALE FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

To acquire funding from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), the 91 soil and water conservation districts {conservation districts (CDs)} of the State of Minnesota must prepare, and biennially update a comprehensive plan. Also, to receive assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), districts must file a comprehensive plan with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the parent organization for the NRCS.

The Ramsey Conservation District's (RCD) 2008 Edition of the Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for its natural resource management and environmental protection programs in Ramsey County. This plan serves as a basis for the District's future annual work plans. The Plan's foundation is based upon the identification and study of natural resource problems, the RCD Board's ideology regarding natural resource protection and management, our intent to solve those problems, and the methods we will utilize to solve problems. This plan is a dynamic document. Change to this document is inevitable as our organization balances the natural resource protection needs of Ramsey County and the social/economic environment in which we must fund and implement our programs.

This plan contains the following:

- The District Mission Statement;
- Brief historical background on the Ramsey Conservation District;
- Discussion of partnerships with governmental agencies, business, and private entities with whom the District works;
- List of District goals and objectives;
- Resources needed to achieve goals and objectives.

II. THE DISTRICT MISSION

The mission of the Ramsey Conservation District is to encourage the protection and improvement of Ramsey County's natural resources in our urban/suburban environment thru cooperative partnerships.

Ramsey County's natural resources provide the industrial base, living space, drinking water, and recreational opportunities for over one-half million people on a daily basis. The major environmental problems we face can be traced to the effects urban land use has on our natural resources and the environment. The continued destruction and deterioration of these natural resources threaten the high quality of life in Ramsey County and require expensive restoration and remediation practices to sustain our quality of life.

The RCD is an experienced, efficient, and inexpensive choice for natural resource protection, restoration, and management assistance for local government, business, and citizens. The RCD has a long-standing history of

promoting the value of environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship and sustainable economic growth and development continue to be the District's main goal and the focus of all its programs. Through existing staff resources and many interagency and other organization partnerships, the RCD provides a collection of programs and services to the citizens of Ramsey County.

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF the RAMSEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT (RCD)

The Ramsey Conservation District is a local special purpose unit of government responsible for natural resource protection and management within the boundaries of Ramsey County. The RCD is governed by five elected officials called supervisors who serve staggered four-year terms. Conservation districts do not have taxing authority. To finance our programs, we rely on grants and "in-kind services" from the Ramsey County Board of commissioners and their departments, grants from state, federal, other agencies, and self-generated revenues, e.g., fee-for- service revenues.

When conservation districts were first conceived in the 1930s, the principal concern was to reduce soil loss from agricultural lands. In Minnesota, conservation districts could not be formed in incorporated areas where non-agricultural land uses existed. Soil loss in non-agricultural areas was not recognized as an environmental problem till the late 1960's. In 1969, a modification of state law allowed the formation of CDs in incorporated areas such as Ramsey County. In 1973 the citizens of Ramsey County petitioned for establishment of a district. The Ramsey Conservation District was chartered on October 24, 1973. There are currently 91 conservation districts in the State of Minnesota.

IV. PARTNERSHIPS THAT HELP THE RCD IMPLEMENT the COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

RCD has official and unofficial liaisons with many governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations. As an agency with countywide jurisdiction, it is in a central position to coordinate and simplify inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional solutions to natural resource management problems. It is also uniquely qualified to address the natural resource management and protection problems of private citizens and their personal property.

With out the partnership/assistance of many organizations, the RCD could not effectively accomplish its mission. Conversely, with out the assistance of the RCD, State and Local governmental units could not achieve their goals and responsibilities. CDs serve as a "hub" of information and assistance for citizens to protect their lands and water resources.

A. Federal Agencies

1. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS is a federal agency created to assist local CDs implement conservation programs and implement the Federal "Farm-Program". In Ramsey County, the NRCS provides assistance to the RCD through special project technical assistance, grant funding to the Metro Area CD to hire landscape restoration specialist, and, through its role in the implementation of the USDA "Farm-Bill", provide assistance

(conservation farming technologies) to many Ramsey County citizens that “truck crop farm ” in adjoining counties.

2. US Army Corps of Engineers

The Corps of Engineers is responsible for the regulation of wetland impacts to a select set of wetlands that are under federal jurisdiction. As the local wetland experts, the RCD will assist the “Corps” review wetland impact permits and determine whether there is Federal regulatory jurisdiction.

B. State Agencies

1. Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

BWSR is a state agency set-up under MN Statutes 103 (state water law) to provide oversight of the local CDs and to provide technical and administrative support consultation. Most importantly, it is responsible for appropriating state grants to CDs.

The MN BWSR is also the “pipe-line” for Clean Water Legacy grant funding to SWCDs. In the coming years, the RCD will seek grant funding for Lakeshore and stream bank stabilization conservation practices throughout Ramsey County.

There are six general types of grants BWSR offers to SWCDs: 1. Operational grants; 2. Conservation practice cost-share grants (see VIIB); and 3. Natural Resource block Grant, e.g., Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) administration and implementation cost-share /Local Water Management Plan Implementation grants; 4. Local water management plan Challenge grants; 5. Non-point pollution control engineering funding (given to the Assoc. of Metro SWCDs). 6. Special cost-share grants. For example, Native Plant Buffer Restoration.

Currently the RCD receives approximately \$32,000 in general operating grants, \$19,000 in general conservation practice cost-share grant, \$19,000 in WCA administration grant (most of this grant is given to local governmental units administrating the WCA), \$10,653 in local water management plan implementation grant, \$5,000 in *Native Plant Buffer Restoration grant, and through the Association of Metro SWCDs an annual average of \$25,000 in non-point pollution control engineering grants.

BWSR also provides other competitive conservation grants for RCD access. In 2008/009, the RCD will utilize a \$50,000 special * Native Plant Buffer grant to restore eroded shoreline on Lake McCarron’s in Roseville.

BWSR provides a staff resource (Board Conservationist) to assist districts with some of their program activities. This has been of value in the formation and operation of many inter-district organizations, such as the Association of Metropolitan SWCDs. BWSR also provides statewide uniformity in SWCD planning, reporting, and financial auditing/accountability.

*New from BWSR in 2008 is the Native Plant Buffer Restoration Cost-share grant. This grant will be very useful in Ramsey County to assist lakeshore owners restore and stabilize eroding shoreline.

The BWSR is also the focal point for CDs to acquire Clean Water Legacy grants. This grant source becomes increasingly important to the RCD for the implementation of conservation practices on private lands.

2. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The DNR's Division of Waters forwards permit requests for comment to the District. Permit requests relate to work within the beds of public waters and wetlands, i.e., (disturbing land and water below the "ordinary high water mark") and the extraction of surface and groundwater resources in Ramsey County. The District has thirty days in which to provide comment to the DNR on any of its permit requests.

The DNR has vested "General Permit" authority to the RCD for lakeshore restoration projects that utilize "bio-engineered" technical practices approved by the RCD. Therefore, lakeshore owners seeking to landscape their shoreline with bio-engineered conservation practices are exempt from DNR permits if they follow RCD recommendations.

The District participates in the DNR's "Ob-well program. We monitor 25 wells within Ramsey County, on a monthly basis, assessing aquifer levels.

3. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

The District, through a joint powers agreement, assists the MPCA inspect and report compliance with Construction Storm Water (CSW) NPDES Phase II permitting. The District is eligible for up to \$50,000 per year in reimbursable expenses. Currently, there are over 200 active permit sites within Ramsey County. Opportunity exists for the District to further its partnership with the MPCA's permit programs.

4. Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN DOT)

Through the MPCA NPDES Permit program's storm water pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) requirements, the District assists the MNDOT with environmental review of proposed highway reconstruction projects within Ramsey County and provides consultation with best management practice selection for road runoff non-point pollution control.

C. Ramsey County

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners and their department staff are essential to the success of the Ramsey District. By statutory design, county government and CDs are linked financially and legally. That is to say, counties are to provide financial assistance for the districts to implement programs, to the extent they feel necessary, and the county attorney's office must provide legal council to the district.

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners' provides approximately 40% of all operational funding for District programs. The Budget and Accounting/HR departments handle all of the District's financial and staff payroll matters. Chapter 103C identifies county attorneys as the legal counsel for CDs. The Ramsey County Attorney's office continues to be invaluable to the District in all-legal matters.

Historically, the Ramsey County Department of Parks and Recreation have implemented many landscape restoration projects with the District's conservation-practice cost-share projects. The County Engineer's staff has designed several of these joint projects. The District has an especially close relationship with the County Public Works Department. Since October 2004, the District has been a partner in the ownership and occupancy of the Ramsey County Public Works campus in Arden Hills. Our close proximity to PW staff has yielded efficiencies in shared technical resources and a synergism of public resources for environmental protection. The County Public works Dept. provides the RCD an annual \$15,000 fee-for service retainer to assist implement environmental activities unique to this department and within the expertise of the RCD. Most notably, much of what the RCD does supports the State's MS4 permit that the county is required to obtain.

The 1987 Legislature designated counties as collection agencies for Agricultural Conservation Fees (a \$5.00 fee paid to counties for registration of all property titles and deeds). In 1988, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners designated that these fees go to the RCD for program operations and natural resource protection projects. Most of the County's direct financial support to the RCD comes from this funding source. This source is now averaging approximately \$90,000 per year and is very subject to fluxuations in the real estate and interest rate markets. At one time, this funding source was adequate for much of the District's programs. However, at current collection rates, it contributes approximately 25% of our operational budget.

D. Municipalities

Ramsey County has all or portions of 19 municipalities within its boundaries with populations ranging from 5,000 to over 250,000. All municipalities are required to develop and implement comprehensive plans that address land use, public services and infrastructure, and the management of storm water. It is with the management of storm water requirements that the RCD assists.

In the past, before most municipalities had environmental staff, the District was a major source of assistance in the development of environmental protection regulations. Many of the early land use conservation plans, wetland protection ordinances, and other natural resource management tools were done by the District. Although most cities now have professional environmental staff, we are still called on to assist in the assessment of environmental impacts with land use change and other natural resource conservation issues. The District also provides GIS maps and data to all requesting municipalities. This technical information assists city planners with land use planning and management decisions and has become an important tool in operation.

The District serves municipalities that have taken on the responsibility to implement the 1991 State Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA) by serving on the official Technical Evaluation Panels and assistance with the administration of WCA reporting requirements.

The District assists many cities with parkland restoration, natural resource inventory and management planning, site plan and platting review, and erosion control through our native plant and landscape restoration program. We have assisted the city of St. Paul and Roseville with wetland restoration and storm water retrofit systems utilizing bioengineering conservation practices.

The District will seek opportunities to assist municipalities comply with State regulation of storm water discharge (MS4 permits) and regulation required by water management organizations. Out of financial necessity, this assistance must be funded by a fee-for-service relationship with the municipality.

E. Water Management Organizations (WMOs; watershed districts and joint powers water management organizations)

In 1982 the State Legislature passed the highly significant Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act, Chapter 103B.201. All of the Metro area was required to form either joint powers water management organizations or watershed districts. At the time this law was enacted, only three water organizations were in existence in Ramsey County and they covered only 50% of the County. Currently, Ramsey County has portions of 10 WMOs within its boundaries. Five are watershed districts (Rice Creek, Ramsey-Washington Metro, Valley Branch, Lower Minnesota, and Capitol Region) and five joint powers entities formed in 1982 (Grass Lake WMO, Vadnais Lake Area WMO, Lower Mississippi WMO, Middle Mississippi WMO, and East Mississippi WMO).

Historically, the District has provided varying levels of assistance to all WMOs depending upon their needs. Various state statutes (Wetland Conservation Act, County Ground Water Protection Act, etc) require us to provide this assistance, but most is on an as-requested basis. Recently, most of the WMOs within Ramsey County have turned to the RCD for technical and administrative assistance delivering land stewardship cost-share programs to the citizens of their jurisdiction.

1. Capitol Region Watershed District

The Capitol region Watershed District was formed in September 1998. At one time, the RCD provided all administrative and office management services for the new organization. Thru a partnership with Ramsey County Public Works, the CRWD completed its first water management plan in record time and was implementing water management protection projects within three years of its organization.

Currently, the District assists the CRWD with implementing the McCarrons Lake shoreline restoration program, provide GIS services, and its environmental stewardship grant program.

2. Rice Creek Watershed District (RCWD)

The RCWD was formed in 1972. Currently, the District assists the RCWD with implementation of a citizen's conservation best management practice conservation practice cost-share program. We also coordinate erosion and sediment control provisions through our NPDES permit work.

3. Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (R-WMWD)

The R-WMWD was formed in 1975 and one of the first functions of the Ramsey CD included helping in its formations. Historically, the RCD has helped develop and implement many of the R-WMWD's ongoing goals and objectives.

The District provides assistance to the R-WMWD with implementing native plant best management practice conservation consultation for which the R-WMWD provides \$10,000 annual grant to the district to help covert staffing cost to provide this service. The district's involvement in the MPCA NPDES permit program also assists with the watershed district's permit program.

4. Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)

This organization was formed in 1982 as a result of the Metro Water Management Act. Over the past

several years, the district has worked closely with VLAWMO helping to organize it as a joint powers entity, develop and amend its first and second water management plans, and carry out several of its natural resource conservation regulations. Historically, this watershed unit has held special concern for the District because its storm water runoff supplies part of the water for the St. Paul Regional Water Authority. This organization also used RCD technical assistance for implementation of conservation practice cost-share programs and the WCA.

5. Grass Lake Watershed Management Organization (GLWMO)

The RCD will implement and administrate a new pilot conservation proactive cost-share program for this agency.

6. Valley Branch Watershed District

The district will assist the VBWD implement a best management cost-share program by providing the necessary technical assistance to identify conservation practice need and design.

F. Saint Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS)

The SPRWS provides potable water to over 1 million customers daily. Most of the water has its source at the Mississippi River and surface water runoff from areas of north central Ramsey County (the VLAWMO). However, depending on the time of year and demand for water, as much as 45% of the water provided comes from groundwater aquifers. Recently, the SPRWS has expanded its deep-aquifer well fields to access additional groundwater to meet increased demands for water. The SPRWS will participate in the revision of the County Groundwater Plan to insure that its new well fields can be protected from contamination.

G. Association of Metropolitan Conservation Districts

The Assoc. of Metro SWCDs is an official governmental entity organized under MN Joint Powers statute (Mn Stat. 471). It includes the SWCDs in the seven county Metro Area. Employed engineering and landscaping technical staff. We will continue to provide input on future direction for this organization. The AMSWCDs shares the employment of two conservation technicians. This cost is, to a degree, underwritten by grants from the NRCS. This association is also the source of NPEAP funding from BWSR.

H. Ramsey County GIS Users Group

The Ramsey County GIS Users Group is a joint powers organization consisting of municipal, watershed district, SWCD, and school district membership from within Ramsey County. The purpose of this organization is to achieve economic and functional efficiencies through collective development and sharing of data for GIS application. A member of the district staff currently serves on the board of this organization.

I. Metropolitan Council

Historically, the District has utilized grants from the Metro-council for native plant best management practice (BMP) projects throughout Ramsey County. We hope that their grant funding opportunities will continue into the future.

V. RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES

A. Minnesota Association of CDs

The district is a member of this umbrella organization. District supervisors and staff will continue to serve on several association committees, when asked, and will continue to bridge the gap between urban and rural conservation issues.

The District attends quarterly Area IV Association of CDs meetings as well as annual conventions.

B. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)

Because of limited funding, the district no longer participates in this organization.

C. Ramsey County League of Local Governments

The district joined the Ramsey County League of Local Governments in 1987 and remains an active voting member. Contact with local governments is important to carrying out the district's mandate.

D. Individuals, Developers, and Consultants

Homeowners get free information and assistance from the District on a number of environmental issues. For example, we can advise when they experience basement water seepage problems, wetland destruction, or soil erosion problems. Our staff can also help with problems such as questions relating to plant materials for landscaping, soils resources, ground and surface water quality issues, well locations, or when considering the purchase of a home or lot.

The District provides help to contractors and developers with assessing impacts to natural resources, advising on methods of preventing soil erosion at construction sites and avoidance of wetlands in site plan design.

The District receives many requests for natural resource data and its interpretation from consultants involved in Phase I and Phase II groundwater clean-up projects.

The district has developed a new program to assist private landowners with reestablishment of native vegetation. Beginning in March of 2002, the district enacted a program to assist landowners in the utilization of native vegetation for urban landscape restoration and conservation BMPs. Through this program; we provide technical assistance and limited cost-share assistance to qualified landowners.

E. Non-Profit Organizations

In recent years with the propagation of non-profit organizations seeking to address environmental conservation, the District has expanded its range of clientele to include these organizations. Frequently we assist them in their search for grants, especially grants related to environmental education efforts. It is clear that with the proliferation of these organizations, they will become increasingly important to the district's efforts.

The district will continue its partnership with the Great River Greening (GRG). In the past the district has worked with GRG to assess Mississippi river bluff land for erosion and invasive plant species eradication.

Assisting not-for-profit groups is an expanding service area that the district will advance in the coming years.

VI. LONG-RANGE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RAMSEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

In its ongoing assessment of natural resource management and environmental protection problems in Ramsey County, the district board identified nine major goals that define its mission. These goals are further divided into objectives to achieve those goals. Objectives are further defined in the District's Annual Work-Plan that details specific activities to be accomplished.

Goal- Promote environmental protection and stewardship

Objectives:

- Maintain an organizational culture that holds environmental stewardship and eco-sustainability as the foundation for all District programs and public policy recommendations.
- Promote awareness and respect for the natural environment, its ecosystems, and humanity's long-term dependence on a healthy environment.
- Promote and participate in partnerships for efficient and effective environmental protection.

Goal- Protect and improve surface water quality

Objectives:

- Encourage the prevention of nonpoint source pollution and its damaging effects on surface waters by implementing conservation programs and assisting other agencies implement their programs.
- Seek and facilitate funding for water quality protection activities.
- Encourage the creation and utilization of uniform minimum management/protection standards for surface water resources in Ramsey County.
- Encourage diagnostic study, ongoing monitoring, and establishment of TMDLs of all major streams, lakes, and select wetlands in Ramsey County.
- Promote the use of native vegetation for surface water protection, erosion control, and urban wildlife habitat management and urban beautification, (i.e., use of native vegetation to infiltrate water and prevent soil erosion and other innovative water quality and soil erosion control conservation technologies).
- Promote the use of "green-roof" and other low-impact development technologies to protect water quality and conserve natural resources.

- Analyze and document shoreline and riparian buffer conditions for all lakes within Ramsey County. Seek State and local funding partnerships to assist shoreline owners’ restore/stabilize eroding landscape and establish native vegetation buffer areas.

Goal- Protect and improve groundwater quality

Objectives:

- Through a partnership with other water protection agencies, revise and update the *Ramsey County Groundwater Quality Protection Plan*. The plan will identify protection strategies and the responsible parties for protection activities
- Promote/facilitate sealing abandoned wells.
- Maintain a groundwater conservation database with GIS application
- Educate the citizens of Ramsey County regarding the need for and value of groundwater stewardship.
- Identify groundwater recharge and sensitivity zones within the County.
- To insure the long-term protection of groundwater resources, we will expand the scientific knowledge of Ramsey County’s hydro-geologic resources.

Goal- Conserve existing Wetlands, restore impacted wetlands, and where possible, reclaim former wetlands

Objectives:

- Fulfill statutory obligations assigned to CD pursuant to the Wetland Conservation Act of 1991 (WCA), as amended.
- Promote biodiversity among wetlands in Ramsey County and improve and protect wildlife habitat, especially where endangered or threatened species exist.
- Monitor local governments’ implementation of and compliance with the WCA and seek the appropriate action when noncompliance is established.
- Seek the preservation and wise management of all wetlands within Ramsey County.
- Administer BWSR funded WCA administration cost-share program.
- Pursue a “net gain” in diversified wetland acreage in Ramsey County.
- Assist local governmental units develop wetland banks.

Goal- Minimize flooding/manage storm water volume

Objectives:

- Assist WMOs, Ramsey County, and municipalities protect their storm water conveyance systems from sediment damage and inventory drainage systems for GIS application.
- Promote flood plain protection policies among local units of government.
- Where appropriate, encourage the use of storm water infiltration technologies to manage storm water volume.

Goal- Discourage inappropriate land use

Objectives:

- Recommend against land use change that is not compatible with the inherent limitations of the soils resource as described in the Ramsey County Soil Survey and/or changes that will have a significant negative effect on the environment.
- Encourage and facilitate the assessment (by municipalities and WMOs) of land use changes and the effects they will have on natural resources and the environment.

Goal- Preserve unique landforms and ecosystems

Objectives:

- Promote and facilitate the identification of unique landforms and ecosystems within Ramsey County.
- Encourage public acquisition and/or the protection of unique landforms and ecosystems both on a local and national level.
- Encourage land use regulations that include recognition and protection of unique landforms and ecosystems, and historical and cultural resources.
- Encourage the conservation of existing “green space” and creation of new green space within the urban core

Goal- Protect and improve wildlife habitat.

Objectives:

- Where appropriate, promote and aid land management activities that protect, improve, and diversify wildlife habitat on public lands.
- Promote and assist land-management activities on private lands that increase and improve wildlife habitat.
- Encourage public and private funding of wildlife management activities in urban areas.
- Promote lakescaping/riparian buffers, rainwater gardens, stream bank stabilization, and native vegetation landscapes.

Goal- Facilitate intergovernmental cooperation for cost-effective natural resource management and environmental protection.

Objectives:

- Maintain interagency liaison with local units of government, State Agencies, Federal Agencies, citizen groups, and not-for profit organizations that seek to protect the environment.
- Where appropriate, facilitate Ramsey County interagency environmental protection and natural resource management consortium(s).
- Continue to support environmental education efforts.
- Advocate efficient and effective environmental protection.
- Maintain a comprehensive natural resource database in a GIS format that can be accessed by all agencies, local governmental units, and citizens in Ramsey County.
- Showcase our partnerships to promote efficiencies and promote intergovernmental cooperation.

- Whenever appropriate, within staffing resources, provide technical and project management assistance to local units of government.
- Expand fee-for-service revenue programs to maximize operating efficiencies and revenues.
- Education-The district hopes to maintain some level of involvement in environmental education. The present program consists of servicing requests for environmental public speaking, participation in the Area IV and State “Envirothon” contests, and many other activities with the private and public education systems. The District will assist the Como Park Woodlands Education Committee with future efforts to create and manage an environmental learning center for area residents. Where appropriate, the district will partner with other agencies and non-profit groups to promote environmental education for all age groups.
- Agency coordination-An issue of primary importance to the district is cost-effective natural resource management. Through standardizing protection activities, increased coordination among agencies, identifying and trying to minimize functional overlap among agencies, and promoting intergovernmental cooperative efforts, increased cost-efficiency can be accomplished. To better serve the citizens of Ramsey County, the district will facilitate relations between Ramsey County and local governmental officials and natural resource protection agencies.
- Finance, Administration, Personnel and Program Management-The district will continue to maintain an efficient and effective business operational environment.
- Database Management -The District, in cooperation with the Ramsey County GIS User’s Group will continue to develop and maintain a comprehensive, easily accessible natural resource database system in GIS format. In addition, the District will maintain annual membership in the Ramsey County GIS Users Group.
- Environmental Issues Ombudsman-The District will review public and private environmental impact complaints and facilitate, where possible, the formulation of solutions to the complaints.
- Web- site Development-Per new BWSR regulations/requirements, the RCD will maintain a web page on the Ramsey County web site. We are currently 100% compliant with BWSR requirements for SWCD web sites. The public can view our annual plan, comprehensive plan, annual audit, annual budget, meeting notices, agenda and meeting minutes, and other special project information.

VII. RESOURCES NEEDED to ACHIEVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. Current and Future Staffing and Financial Needs

As of June 2008, the RCD has a staff of one full-time Conservation District Manager/natural resource protection specialist, one part-time Office Manager/Coordinator, one full-time Conservation Specialist/Data base/GIS manager, one full-time Native Plant and Landscape Restoration Specialist, one full-time Conservation Technician, and one full-time Groundwater Protection Specialist. The District also uses consulting services for short-term projects, technical services from the Ramsey County Public Works and Surveyor’s Departments, temporary student interns, and we jointly employ, through the Association of Metropolitan CDs, two conservation practice landscape technicians.

It is evident that the natural resource and environmental protection challenges of the early 21st century will require new sources of revenue and innovative staffing alternatives. The District will continue to seek new revenue sources to maintain current staff levels and:

1. Further develop a natural resource database for public access;
2. Provide conservation technology to the general public; provide support services to local units of government in Ramsey County.

Assessing the future staffing needs and financial resources to support future staffing needs will be an on-going function of the District Board of Supervisors. Through the process of organizational and programmatic strategic planning, it is hoped that a more detailed assessment of staffing needs and the corresponding financial resources can be established.

B. State/BWSR Conservation Practice Cost-Share Assistance

1. Introduction

Since 1978, the BWSR has operated a statewide cost-sharing program for the application of soil and water conservation practices. This program provides conservation practice funding to the 91 SWCDs on an annual basis.

The general purpose of this program is to provide an economic incentive to private and public landowners for the proper installation and maintenance of permanent soil and water conservation practices. On an average, the Ramsey CD has received about \$19,000 annually through this program.

To qualify for an annual conservation practice cost-share grant, a district must identify areas of “high priority erosion, sedimentation, and water quality problems” as defined by Chapter 8400.0600 of the 1996 BWSR cost-share rules and MS 103C.331, subdivision 11. The Ramsey CD will apply to the BWSR for cost-share assistance on an annual basis.

Without the availability of cost-share funding, much of the desperately needed erosion control, water quality protection, and groundwater protection activities on private and public lands would not take place until they became very severe and potentially cost-prohibitive to remediate in an efficient manner. Most often, cost-share dollars are what bring about the “ounce of prevention that saves the pound of cure”.

To protect water quality, implement proper land-use management practices, and prevent further environmental degradation, the RSWCD will use future cost-share funds (under Chapter 8400.0600) for the following natural resource conservation practices/activities:

Note! The following are not in order of preference.

- 1) Stream bank, lake shoreline and road side protection and restoration activities;
- 2) Storm water conveyance system management and stabilization;
- 3) Grade stabilization structures;
- 4) Critical area stabilization and restoration;
- 5) Steep slope stabilization and restoration;
- 6) Sediment and water quality treatment basins;
- 7) Wetland nutrient treatment systems;
- 8) Sealing abandoned wells;
- 9) Hydrologic and geohydrologic analysis;
- 10) Other existing, new, and/or innovative conservation practices/activities as approved by the BWSR.
- 11) Rainwater gardens and other “bio-infiltration” technologies.

12) Low impact development BMPs.

2. Identification of “areas and problems” within the district where erosion, sedimentation, and water quality problems are in the greatest need of protection and control methods.

Because of our highly urbanized land use patterns (large acreage of impervious surface areas and highly efficient storm water conveyance systems, i.e., curb and gutter storm sewer systems), all lakes and most large wetlands are subject to large amounts of non-point source pollutants.

Storm water runoff is one of the most highly concentrated and contaminated sources of non-point pollution to our water resources. The district considers all lakes, wetlands, and water -ways that receive storm water runoff from disturbed soil areas and storm sewer/ urbanized watersheds as most in need of protection and subject to chronic water quality problems. Therefore, the district considers these areas as “high priority” for the acquisition of cost-share dollars.

Because urban runoff patterns usually increase runoff velocities and quantities, natural or newly constructed water conveyance systems are either severely eroded or subject to erosion. We also consider all natural water conveyance systems as areas of high priority for cost-share practice protection. This is also a high prioritization for the use of cost-share dollars.

VIII. BUDGET NEEDS 2008 TO 2010

To sustain our current (June 2008 level of operations, we will need approximately

\$ 850,000.00 in operating revenue and at least \$ 100,000 in state conservation practice cost-share assistance in the forthcoming five-year period.

The district’s primary source of revenue has been tax levy funding from the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, the delegation, by the County Board, of fees collected for the registration of property titles, i.e., Agr. Fees, and grants from the MN BWSR. As we look into the future, the aforementioned revenues will only support 35% of current district program needs. Additional funding, from either Ramsey County or other sources will be necessary for the district to continue its current programs.

The current trend in environmental protection funding in Ramsey County is for local units of government, not-for-profit organizations, to seek funding from watershed districts. The RCD will need to expand partnerships with watershed districts to secure the funding it needs to maintain current programs.

The district must also seek to establish fee for service relationships with local units of government to maintain financial viability.

IX. CONCLUSION

As threats to the environment increase, this will continue to be a period of great change for local governmental natural resource management activities, and environmental protection agencies.

Most levels of government are experiencing severe funding reductions and citizens continue to demand more efficient and effective government services. At the same time, the need for government involvement in environmental protection continues to rise as a result of current land use procedures.

The RCD will continue to seek new ways to coordinate conservation efforts by encouraging new and innovative partnerships in order to more efficiently utilize government spending. In addition, the public must be made more aware of conservation practices and the agencies that work to protect Ramsey County’s natural resources.

Appendix

Definitions:

- A. 2T: Twice the tolerable soil loss to sustain soil productivity that is between eight and ten tons per acre per year in Ramsey County.
- B. High Priority Erosion: Areas where soil erosion from the actions of wind or water is occurring on Class I-IV soils, equal to or greater than 2xT or any area within 300 feet of a water course where 2xT erosion is occurring or any area within 100 feet of a water basin or wetland where erosion is occurring at "T." The Department of Natural Resources as protected water must classify the water basin, wetland, or watercourse. Erosion problems occurring on a non-shore land area in excess of "T" but less than 2xT are classified as secondary priority.
- C. High Priority Sedimentation: Areas within 300 feet of a water course or 1,000 feet of a water basin or wetland, where erosion rate exceeds three tons per acre per year or areas where a district can show that sediment delivery occurs from a watershed or direct conveyance structure, e.g., a storm sewer or paved outlet channel discharges into these waters.

The water basin, wetland, or watercourse must be classified by the Department of Natural Resources as protected water. Sedimentation problems not meeting these criteria are not eligible for cost-sharing assistance.

- D. High Priority Water Quality: Areas where sediment, nutrients, chemicals, or other pollutants discharge to Department of Natural Resources designated protected waters, WMO protected water resources, or to a sinkhole or groundwater to impair their quality or usefulness, including high priority feedlots and sedimentation problems.
- E. High Priority Feedlots: Feedlots where the pollution potential rating from the feedlot model is greater than or equal to one (1) which are discharging pollutants to Department of Natural Resources designated protected waters or to a sinkhole or shallow soils overlying fractured or cavernous bedrock or within 100 feet of a water well. Feedlots not meeting these criteria are not eligible for cost-sharing assistance except as provided in part 8400.2600 subpart.

