

**Ramsey Conservation District**

# **2009 Revised Annual Plan**

**Approved by the RCD Board of Supervisors on July 13, 2009**

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**2009**

# **Ramsey Conservation District 2009 Annual Work Plan**

**Revised and approved by the District Board on – July 13, 2009**

## **Introduction and Overview**

The Ramsey Conservation District (District) is a political subdivision of the State of Minnesota established to assist the citizens of Ramsey County conserve natural resources. The District is one of 91 Soil and Water Conservation Districts within our State. In 2002, the District shortened its name from Soil and Water Conservation District to “Conservation District” in hopes of making it easier for the public to identify with our programs.

Leadership and governance of the District is provided by five elected officials called “Supervisors”. The role of the District Supervisors’ is to develop policy, prioritize long-range plans for natural resource conservation programs, prepare an annual budget and work plan, and acquire the resources needed to implement natural resource conservation programs per the annual work-plan, e.g., staff and equipment. The District does not have taxing or regulatory authorities and must rely on partnerships with other governmental agencies to fund and implement its conservation programs. Our primary partners for conservation program delivery are: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Metropolitan Conservation Districts (MCDs), and seven water management organizations that have territory in Ramsey County.

**It is the Mission of the District** to protect and improve Ramsey County’s natural resources and in so doing, improve the quality and sustainability of life for our citizens.

To achieve our mission, the District has adopted this Annual Plan of Work for the period of January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. This work plan can be amended by the District Board of Supervisors at anytime during the year.

## **District ORGANIZATION**

### **District Board-**

Karen Eckman, Chair

Margaret Behrens, Vice-Chair

Mara Humphrey, Treasurer

Nick Quade, Public Relations and Information

Carrie Wasley, Secretary

The District Board has formed the following committees to assist in carrying-out District business:

<b>Annual Report/Comprehensive Plan</b>	Karen Eckman
<b>Budget /Finance</b>	Mara Humphrey and Karen Eckman
<b>Personnel</b>	Karen Eckman and Margaret Behrens
<b>Assoc. of Metro Soil and Water Conservation Districts</b>	Karen Eckman and Mara Humphrey
<b>Rice Creek Watershed District Citizen Advisory Committee</b>	Nick Quade
<b>Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization</b>	Margaret Behrens
<b>Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District Advisory Board</b>	Carrie Wasley and Margaret Behrens
<b>Capitol Region Watershed District Advisory Committee</b>	Mara Humphrey
<b>Legislative Committee</b>	Nick Quade
<b>Ramsey County League of Local Governments</b>	Margaret Behrens and Karen Eckman

As of August 10, 2009, the Board of Supervisors will hold their regular meets at 10:00 a.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month. Notice of the meetings will be posted on the District's web-site [www.ramseyconservation.org](http://www.ramseyconservation.org) and at the District office. All regularly scheduled meetings will be held at the District office, 1425 Paul Kirkwold Drive, Arden Hills, MN 55112. The District Board meeting date is subject to change by the District Board. Special meetings will be scheduled and announced as needed.

### **STAFF Resources AVAILABLE FOR Implementing Conservation Programs**

5 full-time staff (5.0 FTE), one part-time staff (.8 FTE), and 1 summer internship { .25 FTE (mid-May through end –August)} are employed by the District to provide technical and administrative assistance for conservation program delivery. The District also utilizes staff services from the NRCS (.05 FTE) and staff services from the Metropolitan Conservation Districts (.31FTE) to help in carrying- out the conservation programs outlined in this plan. Collectively, 6.51 FTE will be needed. **FTE = Full-time equivalency staff**

**District Staff:**

Tom Petersen, District Manager and Wetland Specialist 1.0 FTE  
Ann Heyer, Office Manager and Rain Gauge Network Coordinator .8 FTE (32 hours per week)  
Paul Erdmann, Temporary Conservation Technician 1.0 FTE  
Mike Goodnature, Conservationist Specialist 1.0 FTE  
Ryan Johnson, Urban Conservation BMP Specialist 1.0 FTE  
Geoff Nash, Groundwater Specialist 1.0 FTE  
One Student Intern .175 FTE

The District’s programs also benefit from many volunteers. The District currently has 75 volunteer rain gaugers, a retired geologist that measures 15 deep aquifer monitoring wells on a monthly basis, several former district supervisors continue to assist, and countless un-compensated hours volunteered by the District Board and its staff.

**Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)**

Michelle Wohlers, District Conservationist (housed at the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District in Farmington, MN) .05 FTE

**Metropolitan Conservation Districts (MCD)**

Landscape Restoration Specialists .31 FTE - Available for stream bank, lakeshore and rain garden designs and implementation as well as educational presentations for the use of native plants to conserve water quality and control soil erosion.

Non-Point Engineering Assistance Program – The MCDs receives \$125,000 per year from the BWSR for the purchase of consulting engineering services to design and supervise the construction of conservation practices. The District will identify potential projects and seek funding from the grant on a case-by-case basis.

**FUNDS NEEDED TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE 2009 WORK PLAN**

**Operational Budget:**

Staff Salaries \$276,911  
Student Interns \$6,000  
(Six full-time and one temporary student intern)  
Reserve for Salary increase \$4,000  
P.E.R.A. \$18,471  
FICA \$21,183  
Staff Insurance Benefits \$50,287

Sub-total \$376,852

Worker’s Comp. \$2,200  
Consulting services \$10,000  
Supervisor Compensation \$7,000  
Mileage and Parking \$5,500  
Telephone/Postage \$2,450

State auditor \$4,903  
IS Services \$8,875  
Copy Machine Rental \$3,000  
Printing and Stationary \$900  
Other services/Books/Licensing fees \$450  
Volunteer Expenses \$1,500  
Convention/Meeting/Seminar Expenses \$2,700  
Membership & Dues \$4,200  
Insurance Expenses \$600  
Office Rent \$10,348

Sub-total \$64,626

Office supplies \$1,300  
Program supplies \$300  
Data proc. Equip. \$2,500  
PC Software \$1,000

Sub-total \$5,100

**Grand TOTAL \$446,578**

**Operational Budget Revenues:**

MN BWSR Aid to SWCDs \$43,000  
Ramsey co. Tax-levy \$31,058  
Ramsey County Agr. Con. fees \$211,220  
DNR Ob-well Contract serv. \$1,300  
Fees from Other Govts. \$160,000

**Grand TOTAL \$446,578**

**Cost-share Revenues:**

Each year the BWSR provides grants to the State's 91 SWCDs to carry-out conservation practice cost-share programs. As of June 2009, the District has approximately \$225,000 available to cost-share with property owners needing shoreline restoration and other erosion control and water quality protection conservation practices. The District anticipates additional conservation practice cost-share revenues as the State "rolls-out" the newly passed "conservation sales tax revenues" in the coming months and years.

**EQUIPMENT/ Software NEEDS and Ownership**

An inventory of existing equipment is available at the District office. New equipment will be purchased as needed. Identified for purchase in 2009 are: 1 black and white photo copy machine and the annual ArcGIS license. All computers and software are owned and supported by the Ramsey County Information Services Department. Equipment includes, survey rods and instruments, soils probes, digital cameras, and audio visual projectors.

The District rents a vehicle from the Ramsey County Public Works Department motor pool for use on approved District business, otherwise, District staff are expected to utilize their personal vehicles for all District business. Staff are reimbursed for mileage at the rate authorized by the IRS.

## **District Natural Resources Conservation Partners**

1. U.S.D.A. , Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)-technical assistance
2. Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)- financial and administrative assistance
3. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) , Waters Division- financial and technical assistance
4. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)- technical assistance
5. Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD)- Lobby State environmental policy and law.
6. Metropolitan Council (MC)- technical and financial assistance
7. Metropolitan Conservation Districts (MCD)- technical and financial assistance
8. Ramsey County (RC) - County Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Department, Public Works Department, Environmental Health Department, and Property Management Department- technical, administrative and financial assistance
9. Watershed Management Organizations in Ramsey County ( Vadnais Lake Area Water management Organization VLAWMO, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District R-WMWD, Rice Creek Watershed District RCWD, Grass Lake Water Management Organization GLWMO, Rice Creek Watershed District (RCWD), Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD), Valley Branch Watershed District (VBWD), Middle Mississippi Water Management Organization, and Lower Mississippi Water Management Organization- financial assistance
10. Friends of the Mississippi River-technical assistance
11. Great River Greening-technical assistance

## **A. DISTRICT Natural RESOURCE Conservation Goals**

**Priority Number 1-        Protect and improve Groundwater and Surface Water**

**Priority Number 2-        Preserve, protect, expand, and enhance wildlife habitat, urban green-space, and natural ecosystems**

### **Priority Number 1**

#### **A. Protect groundwater quality and quantity-**

Objective: *Revise the Ramsey County Groundwater Protection Plan* and create a governance/agency structure to insure that the citizens of Ramsey County will have a sustainable groundwater resource for generations to come.

**Activities:**

Revise the 1996 *Ramsey County Groundwater Quality Protection Plan* for adoption in October 2009 by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners.

Steps to accomplish the revision:

1. Submit draft plan for comment to State and Federal agencies, regional agencies, and local units of government per statute requirements.
2. Revise draft plan, considering review comments, for adoption by the Ramsey County Board.
3. Develop and release news-releases highlighting the groundwater plan and current groundwater issues in Ramsey County.
4. Seek funding from the County Board, partners, and State agencies for plan implementation in 2010 and beyond.

Objective: Establish groundwater quality protection commission to guide protection activities throughout the County.

**Activities:**

Organize potential local and state government partners and develop five year work plan based on the revised county Groundwater Protection plan.

Objective: Assist local government address groundwater protection needs.

**Activities:**

Help the cities of Shoreview, Mounds view, and Vadnais Heights comply with Phase I and Phase II Wellhead Protection Plans per MDH rules and regulations.

Advise and assist the City of Shoreview regarding storm water infiltration rules/projects when public works projects may impact drinking water supply areas.

Implement a pilot abandoned well sealing cost-share program utilizing \$10,000 in Neighborhood Development block grant funds through Ramsey County.

Perform and report monthly measurements of groundwater depth in 16 DNR observation-wells. (\$1,500 funding provided by the DNR).

Establish an expanded observation well network and apply for MPCA 319 grant funds..

Seek future well sealing cost-share funds from Ramsey County's Federal Neighborhood Development Block Grant and/or other sources of funding.

**Estimated FTE =1.25**

## **B. Surface Water Quality Protection –**

Objective: Prevent soil erosion, its pollution of water resources, and degradation of storm water conveyance systems.

### **Activities:**

Inspect all permitted construction sites, in the city of Shoreview, for compliance with city erosion and sediment control rules and regulations (estimated .1 FTE).

Help the CRWD and RCWD with shoreline stabilization projects. We are targeting McCarrons Lake and Long Lake shoreline owners stabilize eroding shorelines and restore native vegetation buffer areas. District staff provides technical and cost-share assistance for the installation of conservation practices. (1.0 FTE Ryan and Paul) needed to implement this program. The District has \$106,000 in cost-share funding for this program and anticipates assisting 20 property owners install shoreline conservation practices this year. (FTE 1.0)

Help land owners with erosion problems can seek assistance from the district to identify the cause/source and control of soil erosion. We provide technical assistance and cost-share assistance for the installation of general soil conservation practices. The District has \$9,000 in State cost-share funding for this program. (.25 FTE) needed to implement this program. The District anticipates assisting two landowners with non-lakeshore soil erosion problems.

In cooperation with the VLAWMO, District staff will assess/inventory soil stability and potential for erosion at high-priority locations along Lambert Creek. Staff needed: .2 FTE; Revenue: \$15,000 from VLAWMO

With the recent loss of the MPCA erosion and sediment control inspection contract, the District will actively market its expertise and services to cities in Ramsey County to maintain our leadership role in this field of conservation.

Objective: Infiltrate storm water runoff to: prevent pollution from entering surface waters, recharge groundwater, minimize flooding from urban storm water runoff, and prevent erosion associated with uncontrolled storm water runoff.

### **Activities:**

Through partnerships with several (WMOs) we administrate and provide technical assistance for storm water management best management practice (BMP) cost-share programs. We assist property owners install conservation practices to manage storm water runoff from their properties. WMO cost-share funds will be utilized, by the District, to leverage matching cost-share funds from State, regional, and Federal agencies.

The District will participate in several public information events/workshops to promote rainwater gardens for storm water management.

**Estimated FTE= 1.5**



Objective: Collect precipitation data for climatological research and storm water management technologies.

**Activity:**

Manage a 75 + or - member volunteer rain gage network, reporting data to the MN Climatologist. (.1 FTE)

Objective: Market District services to MPCA -MS4Permit requirements. (.1FTE)

**Activities:**

Ramsey County Public Works will utilize District staff to design storm water infiltration practices to reduce storm water pollution from road improvement projects. Seek opportunities to assist 3 cities inventory storm water conveyance systems and compile annual MS4 permit reports.

Objective: Promote sustainable land and water conservation values

**Activities:**

The District belongs to “Blue Thumb”, an aggregate of metro-area conservation organization that promote the use of native plants for the protection of water resources and control of non-point source pollution, volunteering District staff and Supervisor time at various and sundry public events

The District will sponsor workshops supporting the concept of sustainable land use and water quality protection.

**Priority Number 2**

**Preserve, Protect, Expand, and Enhance Wildlife Habitat, urban green-space and Natural Resource Ecosystems**

Objective: Protect native ecosystems by preventing the spread of invasive plant species.

**Activities:**

Administer and coordinate the Ramsey County Cooperative Weed Management Association.

Hold quarterly meetings of the weed management partners board and two sponsored invasive species workshops.

Apply for FY-2010/2011 BWSR grant funding and other sources of funding to sustain the current Association.

Through a grant provided by the DNR and Ramsey County Public Works Dept., the District will inventory and map invasive plant species within Ramsey County (\$10,000 project funded by BWSR and Ramsey County Public Works).

The District will provide education opportunities to the public on the existence and identification of invasive plants and eradication techniques. Display educational materials at public events and workshops. For example, Living Green, Phalen Waterfest, Wild Ones, Ramsey County Fair, etc.

**Estimated FTE= .45**

Objective: Protect and restore wetlands to preserve and better utilize the biological treatment capacities wetlands can provide to urban storm water treatment, prevent flooding, promote groundwater recharge, and create aquatic wildlife Note! MN Rule 8420 requires that soil and water conservation districts assist the DNR enforce the Wetland Conservation Act and advise/assist local units of government administrate the Wetland Conservation Act.

**Activities:**

Implement all provisions required of soil and water conservation districts as prescribed in the MN Wetland Conservation Act. Assist DNR enforce the law and consult with local units of government administrating the law.

Serve as a “clearinghouse” for questions the public may have regarding the WCA. Manage an administrative services cost-share program (funded by BWSR) providing reimbursement to local governmental units administrating the MN WCA.

Report WCA administration and wetland impact statistics to the MN BWSR. (Staff .15 FTE; Revenue \$6,500 grant from BWSR).

Geo-reference 2000 and 1991 aerial photos to aid in the enforcement of the MN WCA. (Utilize the services of the Ramsey County Surveyors Office to provide mapping product. Funded by \$15,000 grant from BWSR).

Staff will attend WCA technical, administrative and enforcement training.

Advise the DNR regarding permit requests to impact “Waters of the State”.

Review and comment CRWD wetland management plan.

**Estimated FTE= .35**

**G. Overview of Conservation Practice COST-SHARE PROGRAMS Offered by the District**

The District will promote and/or manage several cost-share programs for the construction of natural resource conservation practices. Most of the cost-share funding is provided to the District by the MN BWSR. However, several water management organizations work through the RCD to fund conservation projects with their cost-share funds.

## **BWSR Cost-Share funding**

BWSR provides cost-share funding to the RCD through annual contributions (on average \$19,000) and through competitive special project grant allocations (\$0 to \$250,000). The District is allowed to utilize up to 20% of this funding to cover the cost of technical and administrative services associated with the expenditure of these funds in 2009, the RCD will be administrating/utilizing over \$250,000 in these funds.

BWSR Cost-share Program is administered by the SWCD. The following practices are eligible for 75% cost-share:

- Critical Area Planting
- Diversions
- Field Windbreaks
- Shelterbelt
- Grass Waterway
- Wastewater and Feedlot Runoff Control
- Filter Strips
- Sediment Basins
- Stream bank & Shore land Protections
- Strip-cropping
- Terraces

## **District “NATURE” Cost-share funding**

The RCD utilized up to \$10,000 per year of funding provided by Ramsey County. The district works with private and public landowners in need of financial assistance to install erosion control and/or storm water infiltration management systems, and/or wildlife habitat.

## **WMO Cost-share funding**

The District has partnerships with several WMOs where-by District staff work with land owners to install conservation practices and the WMOs provide cost-share assistance to the landowner. On average, the WMOs provide \$90,000 per year in cost-share assistance through the District to Ramsey county residents.