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East Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District

WADENA Soil & Water Conservation District

Storing up Sunshine

As the days continue to shorten, and the business of harvest season inches closer, take a moment to reflect on summer's sunshine and the cherished moisture we received in-between. We hope you enjoy reading about our summer highlights within this newsletter.

Summer Field Work

Irrigation Schedule Program

Throughout the growing season, our Ag Team monitored soil moisture, crop water use, and crop growth weekly across approximately **4,250 acres** of land for six different crops. Twenty-two producers across Wadena, EOT, Hubbard, and Todd Counties utilized this information to decide the timing and quantity of irrigation necessary for growing a healthy crop.

Irrigation Scheduler Program

ISP Blog

Pivot Uniformity Tests

The Wadena SWCD completed a total of 9 pivot uniformity tests during the growing season this year. These tests are used to measure how evenly and consistently an irrigation system distributes water across a field.

The majority of our local producers needed these tests completed as a requirement for their Irrigation Water Management plan through the Irrigation Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Each pivot needs to reach a score of 85% to pass this test whereas 90% is considered excellent.

Shoreline Visits

Our shoreline team has had a busy summer! So far, Pete and Selma have completed 17 inspections of past shoreline projects and conducted 32 site visits with landowners to discuss best management practices or potential projects across 40 different lakes in Otter Tail County.

The EOT SWCD has also presented to several lake associations over the summer where over 500 of our new Lake Stewardship Guidebooks were distributed (see more about our new guidebooks below). If you're interested in finding out more about our shoreline program, contact Pete or Selma!

Email Pete Guck

Email Selma Bleess

Completed Projects

Ag Waste Pit Closure

Did you know unused manure pits can provide a direct pathway for pollutants to enter our groundwater? This past summer, the Wadena SWCD had the opportunity to help a landowner close their pit that was only 185 feet from an unnamed creek that flows into the Leaf River.

Closing these pits requires all manure and wastewater to be removed from the pit, and once cleaned, they are given the approval to fill the pit back in. Vegetation is then required to established on the site for the next 10 years.

Interested in closing your unused manure pit? Stop by either SWCD office to learn more!

Grazing Management

The East Otter Tail SWCD had the capability to fund a grazing management system earlier this year with the infrastructure being completed in July.

This project consisted of converting agriculture land to pasture where a new perimeter fence, pasture seed, and a watering system was added onto the existing grazing operation. A native planting was also included into the project plan.

Overall, the new fence creates an approximate 200 feet buffer from the Oak Creek, an E. coli impaired water body deemed a priority within our Redeye One Watershed One Plan, which helps us become closer to reaching our goal within the plan.

Training Highlights

RCPP Irrigation Technical Workshop

In June, staff attended the two-day Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Technical Advanced Training Workshop held at Central Lakes College's campus and Ag Centric Center in Staples, Minnesota. The workshop featured training on writing an Irrigation Water Management Plan, demonstrations on precision agriculture tools to aid in irrigation efficiency, and a farmer panel.

From this training, staff gained experience in understanding irrigation systems, creating management plans, and helping our local producers to maintain productivity while improving water stewardship across their farming operations.

Workshop Press Release

Plant ID Training

In July, local SWCD staff spent two days in the field sharpening their plant identification skills right here in Otter Tail County. From prairies and woodlands to wetlands, participants gained hands-on experience identifying native plants and learning how vegetation tells the story of our landscapes.

A big thank you to Dan Shaw, Senior Ecologist/Vegetation Specialist with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), for serving as our lead instructor. Dan's knowledge, enthusiasm, and practical field experience made for an outstanding training that will help staff better serve landowners and support conservation efforts across our region!

Investing in our staff’s knowledge means better conservation outcomes for the communities we serve!

In other news...

Breakfast on the Farm Recap

Breakfast on the Farm continues to be a popular summer event in East Otter Tail County! On August 1st, 1,100 people were served pancakes, sausage, and eggs. Along with breakfast, young and old enjoyed live music, petting the 4H farm animals, playing games, and learning about farming.

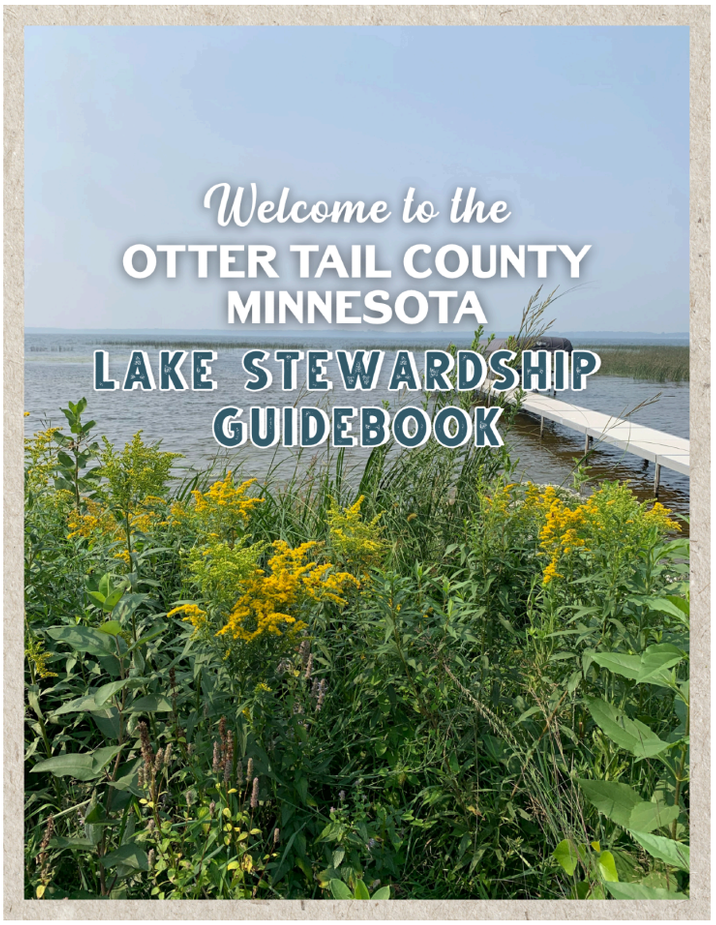
2026 Nitrate Clinics

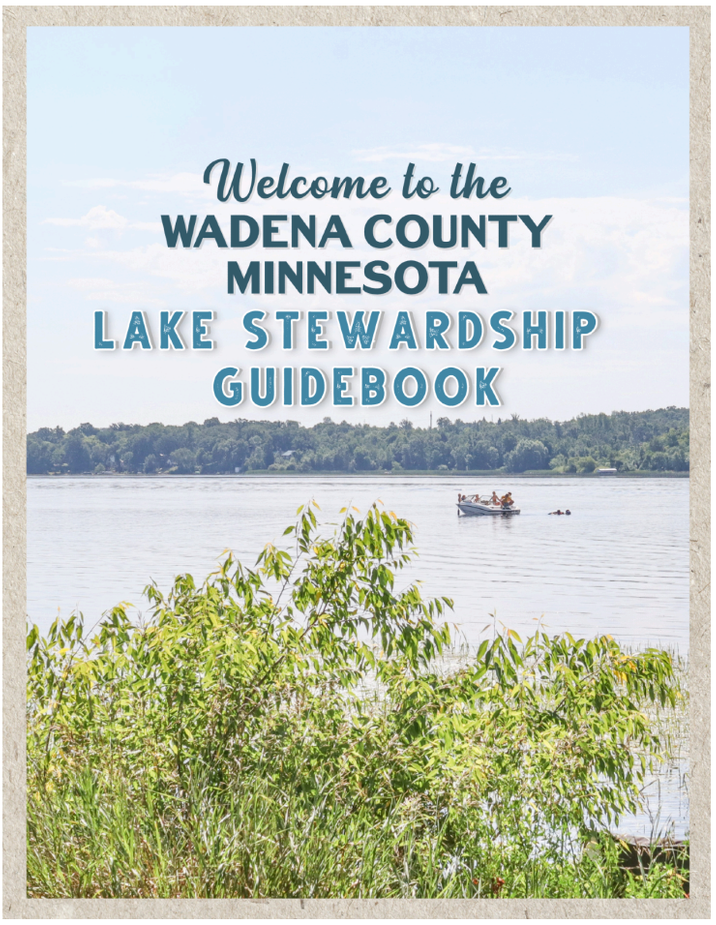
The EOT and Wadena SWCDs hosted nitrate water testing clinics again this summer. EOT tested 79 samples at the Ottertail, Parkers Prairie, and Perham clinics. Wadena tested 79 samples at the Verndale and Menahga clinics. If you get your drinking water from a private well, it is recommended that you have your well tested yearly for nitrate levels. If you missed the clinics and would like to have your water tested, testing is available at both SWCD offices. Find out more about well water testing on our websites.

Wadena SWCD

EOT SWCD

NEW Lake Stewardship Books





We are pleased to announce our brand-new lake stewardship booklets for new (or existing) shoreline owners in both East Otter Tail and Wadena Counties! These booklets contain local resources and information concerning all-things related to being a lakeshore owner including aquatic vegetation, stormwater management practices, fertilizer use, and local agency jurisdictions.

Feel free to stop in either office to grab a physical copy of the book or visit our websites to access them virtually!

EOT Shoreline Booklet | Wadena Shoreline Booklet

Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certified Insider

Looking for updates on the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) or would just like occasional information from Minnesota Department of Agriculture? Sign up for the MAWQCP insider email newsletter, today! If you have specific questions related to MAWQCP, please reach out to either office.

MAWQCP Insider Signup

Late Summer / Fall Blooming Noxious Weeds

According to State Statute 18.78, all Minnesota landowners are required to manage noxious weeds on their property. The weeds listed below bloom throughout the summer/early fall. Make sure you're aware of them and the others listed on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's noxious weed Eradicate and

Control lists to plan ahead on control methods.

Common Buckthorn

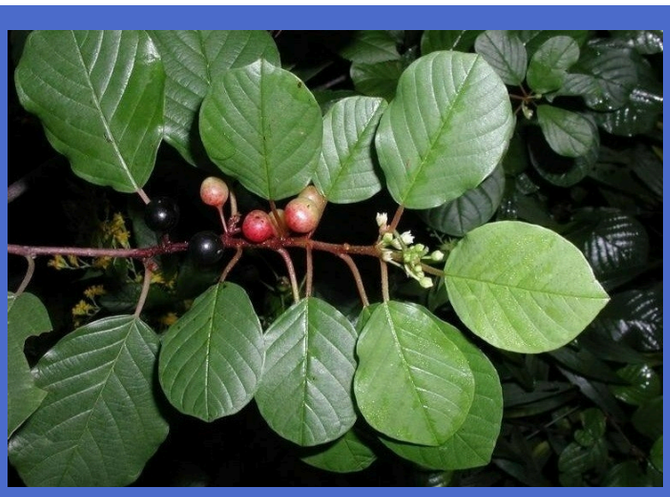
- **Leaves stay green in the fall**
- Plants are either male or female and can grow 20-30'
- Terminal thorn; Leaves are egg-shaped with 3-5 veins

Purple Loosestrife

- Blooms July - September
- Semi-aquatic perennial with dense, bushy growth
- Grows 4-7' and displays opposite, smooth-edge leaves and purple flowers with 5-7 petals

Common Tansy

- Blooms July - September
- Grows up to 4' and displays yellow, button-like flowers with fern-like leaves that emit ordor when crushed
- Shrubby perennial that is toxic to livestock if consumed in large quantites



Glossy Buckthorn

- **Leaves stay green in the fall**
- Grows up to 10-12' tall and prefers wetter habitats
- No terminal thorn; Leaves are oval, smooth, and have 8-9 veins

Folks Worth Highlighting

Todd Becker of Meyer-Becker Farm is the East Otter Tail SWCD Conservationist of the Year.

The Meyer-Becker farm has been in the family since 1948, when Todd's grandfather established a small dairy farm. Todd took over operations from his parents and grandparents and the farm is now focused on crops, primarily corn and edible beans, and feeder cattle.

Todd has quietly been implementing good stewardship practices on his land for many years and has recently been working more closely with the EOT SWCD and NRCS to implement conservation practices. One of these practices is cover crops which Todd has incorporated on more acres over the last few years. Currently, cover crops are planted across approximately 1,000 of Todd's cropland areas, protecting the soil from erosion and promoting soil health. Additionally, Todd has improved the efficiency of his irrigation systems. He does this by managing the amount and timing of water being applied to his crops which helps conserve water usage and limits excess nutrients from reaching groundwater. Congratulations Todd and thank you for your continued conservation efforts!

Neal Farms has been named the Wadena SWCD Conservationist of the Year.

Craig and Chris Neal and their families have a long history of working with both the Wadena SWCD and NRCS for conservation planning and implementing practices on their land. They have expanded their generational family farm and have adopted practices to aid in the prevention of wind, soil, and water erosion while also improving soil health on their land.

Both Craig and Chris are involved in the local farming community, participating with organizations such as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Wing River Local Advisory Team, the Central Lakes College Ag & Energy Center advisory board, the Central Minnesota Irrigators Association, and the Wadena County Farm Bureau. With younger family members following in their footsteps, the Neal brothers understand good stewardship of the land is important for the future of their farm. Congratulations Craig and Chis! Thank you for your continued conservation efforts!

Thank you for taking the time to read about the conservation happening in your area! Our team is passionate about being a technical resource for you and your communities across East Otter Tail and Wadena. We hope you will share this with neighbors, family, and friends.

Kindly,
East Otter Tail SWCD
& Wadena SWCD

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