



FOR LAND'S SAKE

Codington Conservation District Newsletter

1720 4th St. NE, Suite 3, Watertown, SD 57201 • Telephone 605-882-4989

COST SHARE OPTIONS FOR 2015 TREES

It's not too early to start the planning process for spring 2015 tree planting, particularly if you are thinking of putting a shelterbelt into an area that is now sod. Working that site up a few times yet this fall makes it a well prepared site and helps ensure better survival for the trees. Starting sooner rather than later would assure you of getting the trees you specifically want when the district places its tree order with the Big Sioux Nursery in later November, as well as more time to explore any cost share options available for tree planting. Right now there are two definite cost share programs available.

Continuous CRP:

- 50% cost share for planting trees/shrubs, plus annual payment on the acre(s), if the site meets the criteria and current cropping history determined by FSA
- Cost share for tree tubes to be put around certain species of trees
- Per acre cost share for weed control in a CCRP tree planting

The planning, field work and paper work for CRP takes some time so by coming into the NRCS and FSA offices yet this fall you will avoid the last minute rush of tree planting and the possibility of having a limited species of trees to choose from for your shelterbelt.

GFP Woody Habitat Program:

- 75% cost share for planting woody habitat for wildlife (up to \$10,000/planting/year)
- Planting must be at least 8 rows wide and a minimum of 1 acre in size
- At least half of all rows in each planting must be shrub, cedar or juniper rows
- Plantings cannot be made in native prairie/sod and cannot include Cottonwood, Blue Spruce and Russian Olive; land converted from native sod to cropland after 2008 is not eligible

Conservation District Grant:

- Offer cost share for tree/shrub plantings that would provide wildlife habitat, improve livestock protection, reduce wind erosion and/or snow management to farmsteads, roadways and croplands
- Would offer per acre cost share amount for weed control
- Would offer assistance on tree plantings that do not meet the requirements for CRP
- If awarded, this grant would be available for 2015 only and is only for a limited amount of money so eligible plantings will be first-come, first-serve

For assistance with a 2015 tree plan, or if you have any questions, be sure to stop by the NRCS and Codington Conservation District office at 1720 4th Street NE or call 882-4989 this fall or early winter at the latest.



Plantskydd Repellent is available at the district office. This product provides effective, long-lasting protection against deer, rabbits and other animals that may browse on trees and plants. For best protection, treat plants before browse begins in fall or spring. Plantskydd can last up to 6 months over winter or dormant plants and 3-4 months during the active growing season. This product comes in various forms - ready to use spray, powder concentrate, or granules, and ranges in price from \$10-\$22.50. Call the district office at 882-4989, e-mail Sandy at sandy.law@sd.nacdnet.net, or stop by to order either of these products.

DAY AT THE ZOO



NRCS sponsored a booth at the Bramble Park Zoo in Watertown on July 26th as part of Conservation Connections Day. The booth was manned by Jim Dylla and his daughter Emma as well as Peggy Loomis, Hamlin Conservation District. The day featured several conservation oriented groups and organizations for the public to visit with while touring throughout the Zoo.

2014 SEASON WRAPPING UP

The conservation district's crew of Kevin Kranz, Verlyn Nordseth, Larry Winkelman and Jim Noeldner planted 58.5 acres of trees by the end of May even though it was a wet, late spring. Another 8000 trees, as well as several perennial plants, were also sold. After tree planting was completed, Kevin, Larry and Jim seeded grass into 28 acres of older, bigger tree belts and then began cultivating the 198 acres on the route for that service. The crew was still fighting wet, and by then very weedy, conditions so it was difficult for them to get the sites cleaned up real well the first time around the county. By the time they had completed the second, and then the third round, the shelterbelts were looking pretty good. The district thanks our cultivation customers for their patience while the crew worked through this. The cultivation crew has completed the last (and 4th if not 5th) full trip around the county but if you think your trees need cleaning one more time, call Kevin Kranz at 881-2931 or the district office at 882-4989.

David Klatt routed the district's 20' JD drill and 15' Tye grass drill around the county last spring seeding a total of 350 acres of grass with the Tye and the JD covered 2075 acres.

Because of the retirement at the end of 2013 of the last of the large seasonal crew we'd had for more than 15 years, and because of the reduced work load this year for the conservation district, this was the first year the district employed only a total of 4 people for the whole season. **THANK YOU to this crew for a job well done and to all our customers for their continued support!**

Be sure to check your tree sites before the trees are completely dormant this fall for any replacements you may need. Call or e-mail the conservation district office before November 28 to have your replacement trees included in our 2015 order to the Big Sioux Nursery.

FALL SERVICES AVAILABLE

• Tree Grass Seeding

If your trees are beginning to get too big for the cultivation crew to go through with the equipment, you may want to consider having the site seeded to grass yet this fall as a method of weed control. The district has a broadcast seeder and crew that can do this, using a mixture of Kentucky blue grass, perennial rye and creeping red fescue. The 2014 price, which includes the grass seed and the planting, is \$150/acre; the Spring 2015 price has not been set yet.

• District Drills

If you would like to rent the JD drill for any seeding yet this fall, or have any grass seeded earlier this fall, or as a dormant seeding if conditions permit, with the 15' Tye grass drill call David Klatt at 520-1407 or the conservation district office at 882-4989.

PRODUCTS AVAILABLE

Transfilm can be purchased through the district office for \$10/pint if you'd like to use this chemical to give your evergreens a little extra help surviving the winter. Transfilm should be sprayed on conifers sometime after November 1 to protect them from changing temperatures throughout the winter months. This plastic like cover keeps the trees from coming out of dormancy during times when temps warm up but don't stay above freezing very long. One pint of transfilm to two gallons of water will spray a large number of smaller evergreens.



PERENNIALS STILL AVAILABLE

Garden perennials, native perennials and native grasses were popular items last spring and many species sold out, but the Big Sioux Nursery still has quite a variety of perennials on hand. These are available as #300 potted stock for \$8.25/plant and can still be easily planted yet this fall. There are still some potted hardwood trees/shrubs and potted conifers available, in various sizes and price ranges that could also be planted this fall. For a complete list, contact the Conservation District Office at 882-4989 or Sandy at sandy.law@sd.nacdnet.net.

If you would be interested in ordering 4' – 7' apple trees, other fruit trees, or specialty trees for next spring, again it would be better to contact the district “sooner than later”.



NRCS UPDATE

Soil Experts, Farmers Look into Saline-Sodic Soil Problems

by: **Jim Dylla, District Conservationist**

Farmers across South Dakota, especially in the east and the James River Valley, are seeing an increase in salinity and sodic soil problems. Out on the landscape, the white spots on the soil surface without vegetation are identified as saline soils that have high salts, while sodic soils have high sodium levels.

At a July 8, 2014 field day near Pierpont, SD, farm groups hosted experts from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), South Dakota State University (SDSU) and about 120 farmers to take a close look at what is happening with water movement within the soils of those problem areas. As part of a Conservation Innovation Grant from NRCS, North Dakota State University and SDSU are exploring salinity and sodicity treatment practices. The universities are tracking soil performance under various management options and researching alternatives such as using amendments to improve infiltration, especially in the affected areas that are tilled. Much of SDSU’s research and the discussions that day were about successes.

How those areas are managed, i.e., crop rotation, use of a no-till system or conventional tillage, tile drainage, etc., affects the productivity. NRCS Conservation Agronomist Jason Miller, Pierre, told the crowd that managing soil moisture or water stored in the soil throughout the year is important to keep the fields productive. The high salinity/sodic problem is caused by a combination of soils that have high salt concentrations deep in the soil profile and then not growing a crop to utilize the majority of soil moisture received throughout the year. “The management made the natural function of water movement in soils quit working properly,” Miller explained. “So, in essence, the water table begins to rise in some areas because the cropping has been changed to an annual crop versus a perennial vegetation. While other areas, it is water coming or nearing the soil surface on a side hill, or what we call a saline seep. Both occur when the cropping system that is employed does not use enough of the moisture.”

At the field day, Dave Gillen who farms in Aurora County, SD, explained how he is dealing with some of the areas through seeding perennial vegetation to try to get these areas producing again. With corn prices this year, Gillen says his strategy is to get the soil and water movement back working properly so when there is an upswing in corn prices, those areas could potentially be planted again.

“Understanding water movement through those soils and using farming practices that mimic nature to better manage plant available water will speed recovery and get saline or sodic soils producing any return,” Miller explains.

“Just tiling a corn and soybean field to try to move water isn’t the answer because in a salinity/sodic area, the overall soil ecosystem has been damaged and isn’t functioning correctly,” says Miller. “You’ve got to address ‘the whole’ of the situation. Those areas need a perennial crop that will tolerate the salinity/sodic soil to use the available soil water.”

Conventional tillage systems destroy soil structure and the macropores that are essential for water movement,” explains Miller, “so eliminating tillage will help the soil’s physical, biological and chemical properties. Tillage makes the problem worse because it dries the surface, which results in more salts

accumulating at the soil surface from the capillary rise of soil water from the disturbed area.

Soil microbes need food. Corn and soybeans are not growing in these areas so there’s no food for the microbes to function. Miller recommends planting a barley or rye at the minimum, but perennial vegetation for a minimum of 3-5 years would be best. Monitoring through soil tests will document the soil health benefits.

“Managing for healthier soils can be complex task with long-term implications. If you’re seeing problems with your soil and production, get help,” says Miller.

Increasing organic matter to get better use of water in those areas can be done by eliminating tillage and keeping living roots growing longer throughout the year. Miller says, “Crops, like corn and soybeans, use water in the soil for a limited time so adding cover crops use more moisture and to feed the soil will help.”

Diversifying crop rotations or other alternatives such as seeding perennial vegetation will also help to bring back proper soil function. An area could also be entered into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under continuous sign-up. NRCS can help farmers determine the best option for these resource concerns.

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GRANT FUNDS STILL AVAILABLE



Codington Conservation District is one of the partners in multi county grant programs available for producers in Codington County.

Prairie Coteau Water Development Grant will offer cost share for pipelines, tanks, rural water hookups, wells, dugouts, and solar water pumps on private grassland within the project area. Additionally cost share options are available for fencing, grass seeding, and wetland creations. Tom Wickstrom, US Fish & Wildlife Service, is the contact person for this grant. His number is 605-947-4521.

The Upper Big Sioux Watershed Project has funds to bonus up to 35% on top of CRP and CP programs that are along or touch the Big Sioux River and major tributaries. They are always looking to cost share any clean water project within the watershed boundaries. The contact person for this would be Roger Foote at 605-882-5250, 605-880-9943 or rfoote@iw.net.

If any of these grant or cost share options look like a program that would work for an idea you may have to improve your operation, call for further details.

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*The Codington Conservation District's
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