



**SWCD**

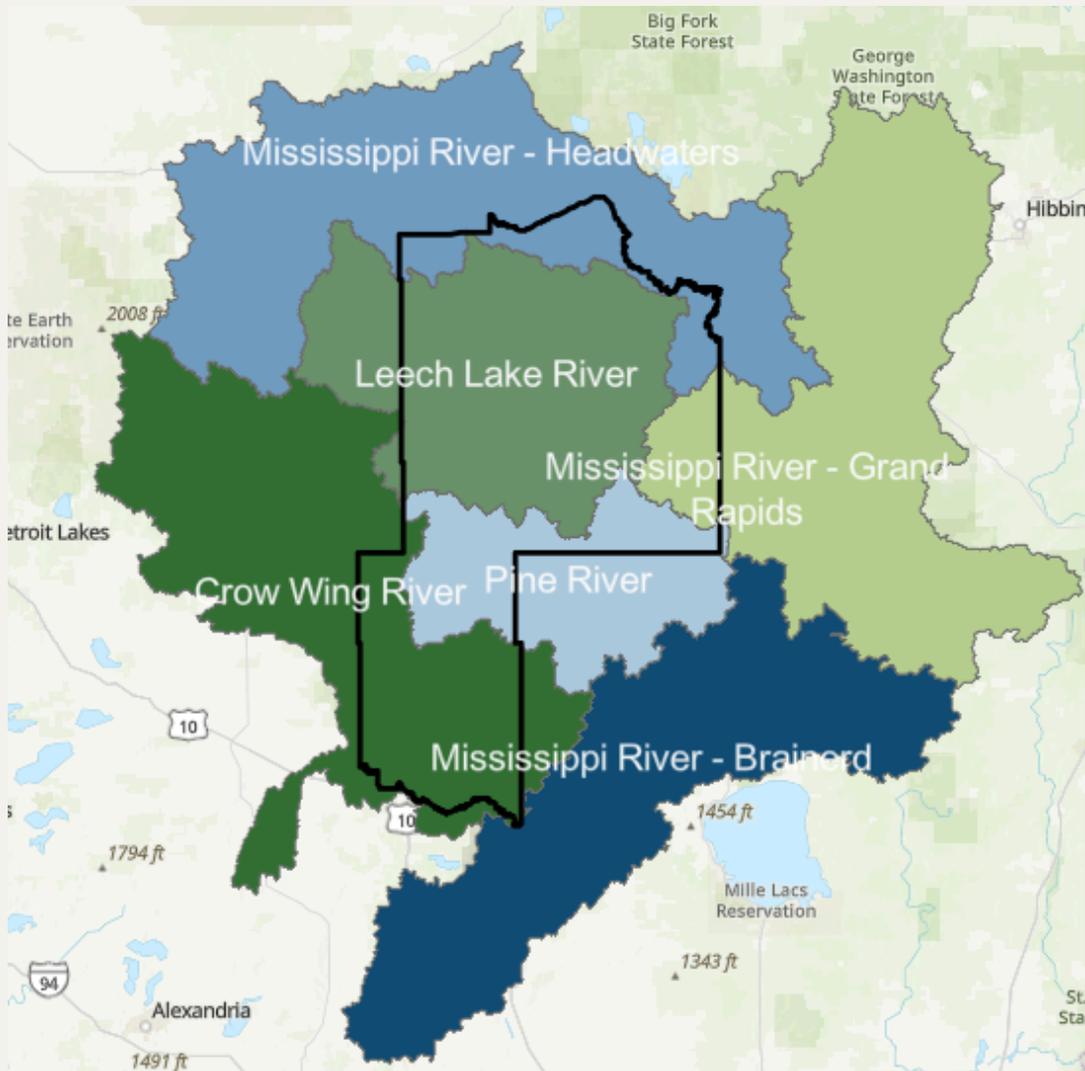
**2025 Annual Plan**

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# Cass Soil and Water Conservation District

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The Cass Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) 2025 Plan is developed from the district's long-range strategic plan. Additionally, the SWCD has adopted the six comprehensive watershed management plans that are within the boundaries of Cass County.



The SWCD is a local unit of government that assists private landowners with voluntary conservation to protect, preserve, and enhance soil health, ground water, and surface waters within Cass County.

The purpose of the plan is to guide the district in effectively providing conservation opportunities, education, and outreach to the priority areas identified in the six comprehensive watershed management plans.

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# Cass Soil and Water Conservation District

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## CASS SWCD VISION

Protecting the Heart of  
Minnesota's Lake Country

## CASS SWCD MISSION

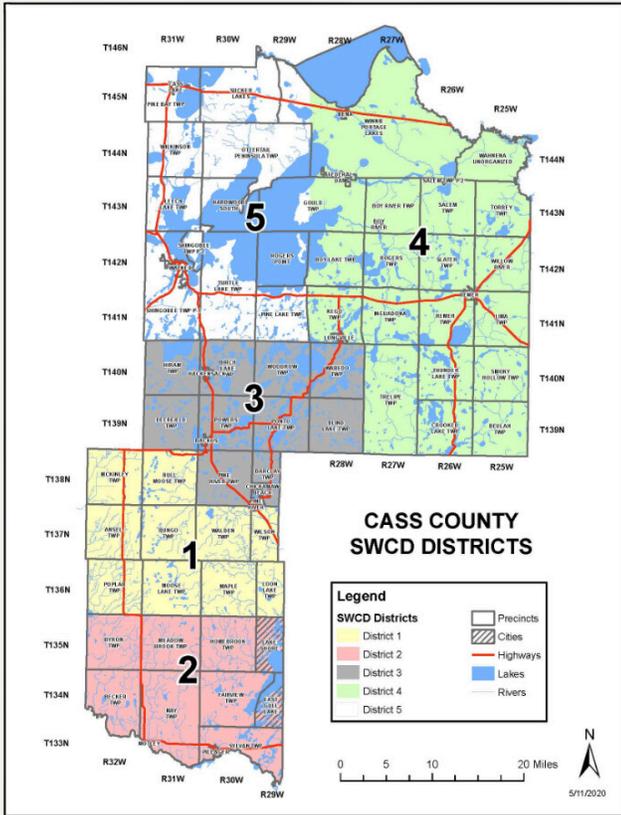
We provide leadership, technical, and financial assistance to landowners in the conservation and management of soil and water resources.

## CASS SWCD VALUES

Conservation  
Collaboration  
Stewardship  
Integrity



# Board of Supervisors



## District 1 Tom Kuschel



### Roles and Committee Assignments:

- Board Vice Chairperson
- Pine River Watershed Alliance
- Crow Wing Forage Council
- Leech Lake River Watershed Policy Committee

### Why I Serve?

It is my way of ensuring that water quality and soil health are guaranteed for future generations.

## District 2 Ken LaPorte



### Roles and Committee Assignments:

- Crow Wing River Watershed Policy
- MASWCD Area 8 (Director)
- Cass County Liaison Committee
- Cass County Planning Commission

### Why I Serve?

To help implement voluntary conservation practices in Cass County.

## District 3 Katy Botz



### Roles and Committee Assignments:

- Pine River Watershed Policy
- MN Association of Forestry
- Area 8 Envirothon

### Why I Serve?

To preserve the planet for future generations.

# Board of Supervisors

## District 4 Dave Peterson



### Why I Serve?

To promote conservation through education, technical advice, and possible financial support. Help landowners improve or preserve our great resources in Cass County.

### Roles and Committee Assignments:

- **Board Chairperson**
- **Policy Committee**
- **Mississippi Headwaters watershed Policy**
- **Upper Mississippi Grand Rapids Watershed Policy**
- **Cass County Liaison**
- **Cass AIS Program**

## District 5 Jennifer O'Neill



### Why I Serve?

The mission of Cass SWCD is to provide leadership, technical and financial assistance to landowners in the conservation and management of soil and water resources. It is a privilege to contribute to that mission to serve Cass County citizens.

### Roles and Committee Assignments:

- **Board Treasurer**
- **Board Secretary**
- **Policy Committee**
- **MASWCD Area 8 (Treasurer)**
- **Technical Service Area 8**

**Want to be an SWCD Supervisor? Candidate filing begins May of 2026.**

**Who should run? Minnesota citizens interested in influencing natural resources issues at the local level are encouraged to run for supervisor of their local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).**

**How often do they meet and what do they discuss? Supervisors meet monthly to discuss the business of the SWCD, including state grant allocations to landowners, district conservation priorities, and coordination with other local units of government and state and federal agencies.**

**Are Supervisors paid for their time? Supervisors do not receive a salary, although they do receive compensation for attending meetings and are reimbursed for expenses.**

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# Cass SWCD Staff

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**Dana Gutzmann**

**Conservation Manager 218-547-7246**

**My Purpose at Cass SWCD:**

I commit my time and energy to Cass SWCD because I know we can make a difference. We can protect what needs protecting. We can help farmers increase their return on investment while improving soil health and decreasing run-off. We can re-establish native vegetation, shrubs and trees on shorelines so generations can continue to swim, fish, and otherwise enjoy the lakes and streams.

**Steve Henry**

**AIS Technician 218-547-7324**

**My Purpose at Cass SWCD:**

Growing up in Minnesota I was blessed to enjoy our wonderful forests, water, and lands. I am fortunate to be able to help others protect, preserve, and enhance our resources.

**Jenny Blue**

**Administrative Technician 218-547-7399**

**My Conservation Drive:**

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall

**Aly Bergstrom**

**Resource Conservationist 218-547-7407**

**My Conservation Drive:**

The concept that thoughtfully managed agricultural production systems can be the solution to bringing our natural systems back into sync is exciting to me. I enjoy working with producers to improve the functionality of their operations, while also protecting our shared natural resources.

**Ryan Carlson**

**Resource Conservationist 218-547-7280**

**My Conservation Drive:**

I am passionate about everything Minnesota. I love the lakes, the diverse habitats, the outdoor culture, and the people. Through my work, I'm fortunate to pursue these endeavors in order to help preserve the environment for future generations.



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# Priority Concerns

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The priority concerns in Cass County have been developed through the One Watershed One Plan process. Each comprehensive watershed management plan addresses **specific** priority concerns and goals for protection, enhancement, and improvement in those watersheds. However, there are **common** themes and goals to be addressed among all the plans and they include the following:



1) Agricultural land management - implement agricultural best management practices for drinking water and surface water protection.



2) Drinking water protection - implement agricultural best management practices and well sealing. Protect Drinking Water Supply Management Areas.



3) Landscape protection - permanently protect land through conservation easements and Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA).



4) Forest and plant health - implement forest management best practices and forest management plans for private forests.



5) Shoreland management - implement lakeshore/riparian enhancement and promote preservation of natural shorelines.



6) Nutrient reduction - reduce phosphorus in surface water through agricultural best management practices, shoreline enhancement, and stormwater run-off control.



7) Connectivity enhancement - replace barriers to fish passage (dams, road crossings, culverts).



8) Resiliency - build resiliency into all projects implemented where possible.

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# Sources of Funding 2025

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The Cass Soil and Water Conservation District is funded through a combination of non-competitive state aid, watershed based implementation funds, and competitive grants. Cass County contributes support in the form of office space, vehicles, and office supplies.

## Funds to Support Staff and Supervisors

- SWCD Aid (State)
- Wetland Conservation Act (Board of Water and Soil Resources-BWSR)
- Buffer Law (BWSR)
- Conservation Delivery (BWSR)
- Watershed Based Implementation Funds (BWSR)
- Soil Health Staff Grant (BWSR)

## Funds to Support Projects

- Conservation Contracts (BWSR)
- Watershed-Based Implementation Funds (BWSR)
- RIM Easements (BWSR)
- Soil Health Delivery Grant (BWSR)



# Staffing

The staff consists of three full-time district staff, and two part-time County staff members. While district staff are employees of Cass County, district operations and priorities are set by the Cass SWCD Board of Supervisors.

Activity	FTE
Increase public awareness of the soil and water conservation activities and programs	0.6
Enforce the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act	0.5
Provide technical design for agricultural, shoreline, and stormwater best management practices	1.6
Provide administrative support to SWCD	0.5
Provide support to private forest owners for protection and implementation of best management practices	0.2

Funding Source	Resource Conservationists	Conservation Manager	County Staff
SWCD Aid	1%	19%	13%
Wetland Conservation Act	2%	37%	5%
Buffer Law	2%	0%	0%
Watershed Based Implementation Funds	45%	44%	13%
Soil Health Staffing	50%	0%	0%



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# Schedule of Activities

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## January

- Regular Board Meeting
- Review the Annual Plan
- Review Accomplishments Report
- Election of Officers and Committee Assignments
- E-Link End of Year Reporting

## February

- Regular Board Meeting
- Complete all Year End Reporting Requirements
- Distribute Annual Plan
- Distribute Accomplishments Report

## March

- Regular Board Meeting
- Attend Legislative Days at the Capital
- Coordinate Local Work Group Meeting
- Quarterly Newsletter

## April

- Regular Board Meeting
- Prepare Resolutions for Area Meeting
- Observe Soil Stewardship Week
- Participate in the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Earth Day Celebration
- Quarterly eLINK Reporting

## May

- Regular Board Meeting
- Easement/Project Spot Checks
- Envirothon

## June

- Regular Board Meeting
- Easement/Project Spot Checks
- Begin Annual Buffer Compliance Spot Check
- Quarterly Newsletter

## July

- Regular Board Meeting
- Select Outstanding Conservationist of the Year
- Pillager Fair
- Quarterly eLINK Reporting

## August

- Regular Board Meeting
- Preparation of County Budget Request
- Easement/Project Inspections

## September

- Regular Board Meeting
- Area 8 Bus Tour
- Complete Easement/Project Inspections
- Quarterly Newsletter

## October

- Regular Board Meeting
- BWSR Academy
- Vote on MASWCD Resolutions
- Quarterly eLINK Reporting

## November

- Regular Board Meeting
- Contact Outstanding Conservationist for MASWCD Annual Convention
- Review Preliminary 2026 Budget

## December

- Regular Board Meeting
- Adopt 2026 District Budget
- Attend MASWCD Annual State Convention
- Quarterly Newsletter

# Cost Share Program Summary

Cass Soil and Water Conservation District considers high-priority projects first. If you have a project you're interested in completing, but require financial assistance, please call us to learn more about applying for our cost share program 218-547-7241. Below are some rates for more common cost share projects.

Agricultural Soil Tests	100% up to \$200/year
Cover Crops Basic (1-2 species)	\$30 per acre (80 acre max)
Cover Crops Complex (3+ species)	\$50 per acre (80 acre max)
No-till Drill for cropped acres	\$14 per acre
Pasture and Hay Planting - Crop to Pasture	50%
Annual Forages for Grazing in perennial hay pasture	50% (40 acre max)
Permanent Interior Fence	NRCS flat rate (\$3,000 cap)
Livestock Watering Systems	NRCS flat rate (\$3,000 cap)
Prescribed Grazing	\$15/acre (\$1,500 cap)
Well-decommissioning	\$300
Private Forest Management Plans for SFIA/Easements/BMPs	75% of current DNR (\$2,000 cap)
Private Forest Management plans for 2C	25% of current DNR (\$500 cap)
Forest Management Practices for Water Quality	75%
Shoreland Restoration or Buffer Planting	50%



# 2025 Budget

	INCOME	EXPENSE
Revenue		
AIS Admin	\$7,250.00	
BWSR Grants	\$640,323.00	
DNR - ObWells	\$3,360.00	
Reimbursement from other Government	\$83,000.00	
TSA 8 Engineering	\$30,000.00	
Reserves	\$25,000.00	
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$788,933.00</b>	
Expenditures		
District Operations - Personnel		
Full Time Wages/Withholdings/Health Insurance		\$373,000.00
Part Time Wages/Withholdings/Health Insurance		\$45,633.00
<b>Total Personnel</b>		<b>\$418,633.00</b>
District Operations		
Supervisor Expenses		\$40,000.00
Lodging and Expense		\$3,500.00
Dues and Registration		\$14,000.00
Education and Promotion		\$3,500.00
Office Supplies / Equipment Maint		\$3,800.00
Insurance and Audit Services		\$8,500.00
Field Supplies		\$2,000.00
Vehicle purchase		\$25,000.00
BWSR Grants		\$240,000.00
TSA 8 Engineering		\$30,000.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>		<b>\$788,933.00</b>



[www.CassSWCD.org](http://www.CassSWCD.org)

218-547-7241

### MISSION

We provide leadership, technical, and financial assistance to landowners in the conservation and management of soil and water resources.

### VALUES

Conservation, Collaboration, Stewardship, and Integrity

#### Mailing Address

PO Box 3000  
Walker, MN 56484

#### Physical Address

303 Minnesota Ave West  
Walker, MN 56484

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<https://www.cassswcd.org/contact-5>

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