



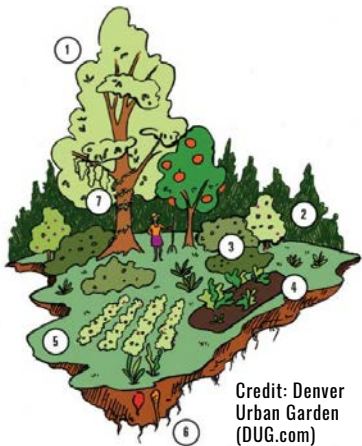
Spring Tree Sale Update & Food Forest Kits

BY: RACHEL RUDQUIST & BRANDON SPAIN-BRIST

Spring is here and many of us are ready to get our hands dirty. We are looking forward to seeing you at our annual tree sale!

LAYERS OF A FOOD FOREST

1. **Canopy**
Large Fruit & Nut Trees
2. **Low Tree Layer**
Dwarf Fruit Trees
3. **Shrub Layer**
Berry Bushes & useful Shrubs
4. **Herbaceous**
Flowers, Herbs & Vegetables
5. **Soil Surface**
Low-Growing Ground Covers
6. **Root Layer**
Fungi and Root Vegetables
7. **Vertical Layer**
Vines & Espaliers



Credit: Denver Urban Garden (DUG.com)

This year, we will also be offering a limited number of food forest garden kits for sale at the tree distribution location. Each species in the kit contains edible elements and provides many additional wildlife and pollinator benefits!

Technical assistance from SWCD staff is available for planting these kits. To find out more, visit page 6 of this newsletter or our virtual lab on the SWCD website.

This year the distribution days are Friday, May 2 from 10 am - 5 pm and Saturday, May 3 from 10 am-2 pm. If you don't have a pick time, you can go to the QR code found below and reserve an open time to pick up your items. Please call us if you need help signing up for a time. We will reach out to those who do not have a pick time.

The pick-up location this year is at the Hubbard County Fairgrounds located at 201 Fair Ave, Park Rapids, MN. Watch for signs, we should be located near the bus garage.

IMPORTANT: Landowners will need to get their MN Native seeds and plant kits ordered ahead of time. We won't have extra seed packs or plant kits available at the tree sale. These items are a pre-order item, and the deadline to get orders in will be April 11th!

We look forward to seeing you soon!



Hubbard
SWCD Online
Tree Sale
Shop



Hubbard
SWCD Pick
Time
Registration



In This Issue:

Spring Tree Sale Update & Food Forest Kits
Page 1

Opportunities for Protecting the Lakes We Love/Lake Associations
Page 2

Environmental Education
Page 3

Soil Health & Partnership with Becker SWCD
Page 4

NRCS Programs: EQIP & CSP
Page 5

New Conservation Projects Technician/2025 Plat Book
Page 6

Nitrate & Drinking Water Testing
Page 7

Additional Information & Contacts
Page 8



Opportunities for Protecting the Lakes We Love

BY: JAKE SHAUGHNESSY

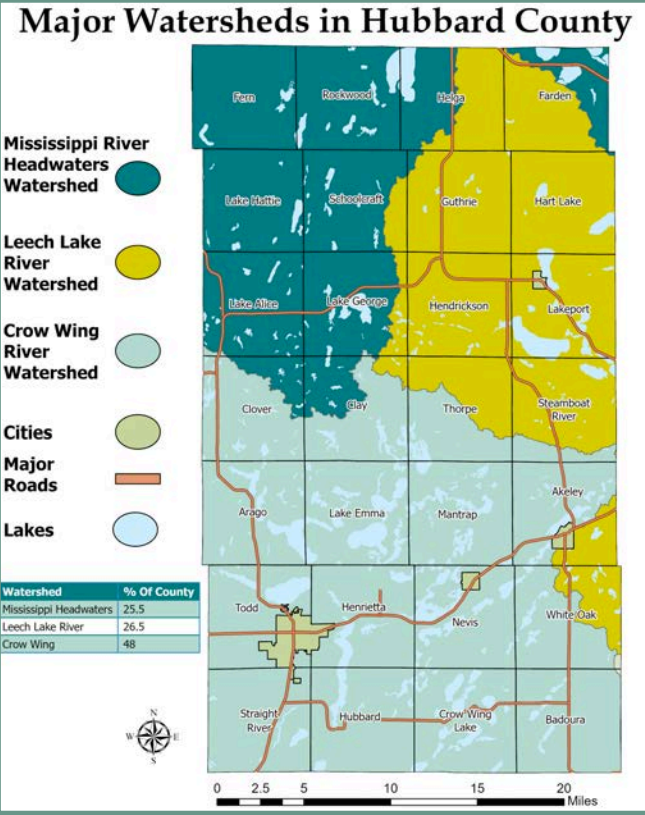
Hubbard County is lucky to have many amazing lakes and rivers with great water quality and bountiful fisheries. However, it takes some effort to keep them that way as there is increasing pressure on shoreland and the watersheds that feed the lakes. To maintain or improve a lake's water quality, you need to address near-shore and watershed-wide concerns. With many of our lakes, the watersheds have minimal disturbance, putting more emphasis on near-shore activities.

Water quality and lake life can work hand-in-hand with little or no impact on how you enjoy your shoreline or your lake. Many lake lots, especially those developed a while ago, have poor stormwater management and minimal shoreline vegetation. A simple way to make your shoreline water quality friendly is through installing a shoreline buffer or addressing runoff from impervious surfaces. These practices can reduce the amount of nutrients entering the lake from your shore with minimal impact to the way you enjoy your lake.

The Hubbard SWCD has a variety of programs that can assist in making your lake lot more water quality friendly. That can range from installing a simple buffer or helping to fix major erosion issues. Please reach out to the Hubbard SWCD with any of your shoreline stewardship questions.

Opportunities For Lake Associations

Are you part of a lake association and are looking to promote water quality and shoreline stewardship across your association? The Hubbard SWCD has worked with many associations to promote shoreline stewardship and provide free site visits for technical assistance to lake residents. This has been done through SWCD staff being guest speakers, setting up tables for shoreland owners to meet staff, or simply providing educational materials. If you are interested in learning more, please reach out to Jake Shaughnessy at 218-252-5391 or Jake@hubbardswcd.org.



Hubbard County One Watershed One Plan Program Update

Hubbard County has now completed the planning process for the One Watershed One Plan Program. This means that every watershed across the county is now in the implementation phase.

What does this mean for you? Having active watershed plans can increase the availability of funding for a variety of conservation programs for agricultural, forest, shoreline, and urban landscapes. If you are interested in learning what programs we have and which may overlap with your goals, please reach out to our office for more information.



Environmental Education

BY: JACK SLIPY

To access our Virtual Lab and learn more scan the code below!



We are excited to announce that the Hubbard County SWCD was awarded an environmental education grant from the EPA.

The SWCD is using the funds to create a project to ensure the quality of our air, water, and soils through the proper management of forests. This will be accomplished by educating people on the importance of a healthy ecosystem. This project will teach the basic function of northern Minnesota's ecosystems. The goal is to show the connectivity of the ecosystem and how important it is to protect all aspects of the ecosystem. A parallel goal of the project is to help solve the state seed/cone shortage. The state nursery relies on seed and cone collectors to provide the seed it needs to grow trees. There is currently a shortage of collectors and therefore a shortage of seed. The Hubbard SWCD aims to provide a platform that includes all the educational and physical materials needed for an individual or group to go seed/cone collecting.

This platform will be in the form of an online virtual lab. The online virtual lab will be used by many as a basis for environmental education. This online virtual lab will provide users access to grant information, educational content, seed/cone collection resources, and more.

All the virtual lab education and collection resources are set to be ready for use by the end of summer 2025. However, there have been several schools that have been pilot groups in the first year of this project. Menahga, Park Rapids, Walker, Nevis, and Schoolcraft schools have all taken action and have been using SWCD resources to begin learning about the environment. They have been doing hands-on activities and putting boots on the ground going out in nature to learn about its function.



THANK YOU

A sincere thank you to all our donors and volunteers so far in 2025 who have helped us put on educational events for the community and students free of charge. We appreciate you!

2025 Grazing Workshop Donors

- Walmart
- Laporte Grocery
- L & M Supply
- MN GLCA
- U of M Extension
- MN Office of Soil Health
- Bagley Livestock Exchange
- Rhode's Feed and Garden
- Nei Bottling of Bemidji
- Hugo's Park Rapids

2025 Freshwater Festival Donors

- Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations
- Camp Wilderness BSA
- Mantrap Valley Cons. Club
- Badoura Forest Nursery
- Citizens National Bank
- Eastern Hubbard County Fire District
- Bad Axe Lake Association
- Eagle Island Lake Association



Soil Health & Partnership with Becker SWCD

BY: MEGAN FITZGERALD

In 2024, Hubbard and Becker SWCDs used grant funding to hire a shared Soil Health Coordinator, Claire Olson. This position will provide management, education/information, and training services, as well as review plans and cost estimates to assist and enable existing technical staff to implement soil health practices and develop meaningful relationships with landowners and cooperators. The goal of this position is to integrate soil health practices into projects throughout the district.

Education services will include overseeing planning for two landowner forums each year. One such forum was a Soil Health Roundtable event held in Sebeka on March 18th. Local producers were invited to share and learn about cover crops, no-till, strip till, grazing, and more. In addition to planning these landowner events, the Soil Health Coordinator will assist in organizing soil health outreach materials, presentations, and hands-on learning resources.

The Soil Health Coordinator is also planning a Soil Health Bus Tour this summer on July 29-31. The tour will be led by Becker SWCD and assisted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Participants will include one staff person and two producers from each SWCD in the Red River Valley, who will spend three days touring farms in western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota to see real-life examples and hear from producers about their experiences in working to improve soil health through their operations.

With soil health becoming a higher priority in SWCD operations, there are increased opportunities to receive cost-share funding for a variety of agricultural BMPs. Funds can cover a variety of practices including no-till drilling, cattle watering, erosion control, filter strips, grassed waterways, tree planting, and many more. If you have questions about cost share, please reach out to the SWCD office at 218-732-0121, ext. 4.

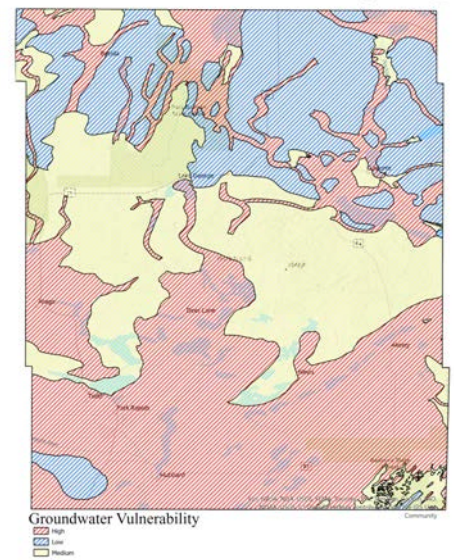


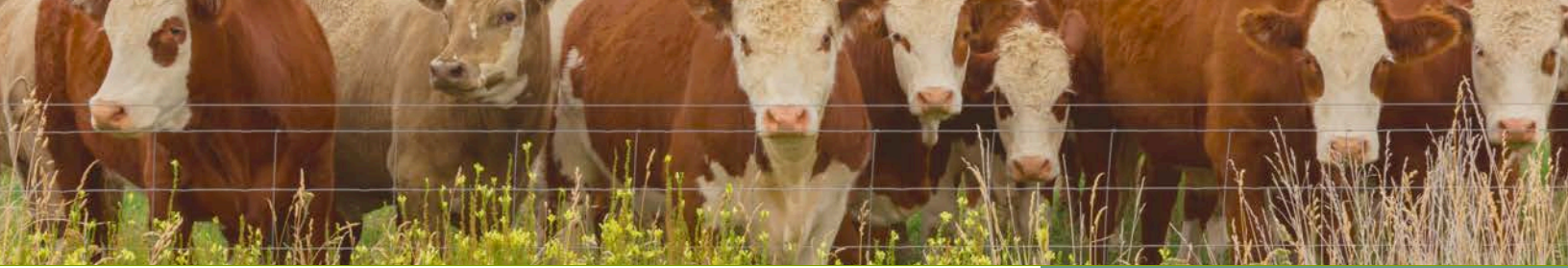
Well Sealing To Protect Drinking Water

The sandy, porous soils in Hubbard County are highly vulnerable to contamination. This makes taking steps to protect groundwater important. Unused and abandoned wells can be a direct route for contamination to enter the water table. Sealing these wells is vital for protecting drinking water quality.

The Hubbard SWCD has funds to assist landowners in sealing these unused wells. If you know of an unsealed or abandoned well on your property, please reach out to the Hubbard SWCD.

Groundwater Vulnerability Map





Environmental Quality Incentives Program

BY: DAN PAZDERNIK

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that helps farmers maintain or improve production while conserving natural resources on working landscapes. Benefits may include conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against drought and weather extremes. EQIP offers technical and financial assistance through contractual agreements. EQIP applications are accepted continuously with periodic application cut-off dates for ranking periods.

For more information on this program and to see what practices may benefit your operation, please contact your local NRCS office at 218-732-9723.

Conservation Stewardship Program

BY: DAN PAZDERNIK

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages farmers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities. CSP is available for agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest land. It is a working lands program that helps to build on existing conservation efforts while strengthening operations. CSP applications are accepted continuously with periodic application cut-off dates for ranking periods.

For more information on this program and to see what it can offer to your operation, please contact your local NRCS office at 218-732-9723.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Word Scramble

BAHTTAI
TPROETC
NIMRLNOTEAVEN
TARWE
ENOISRO
ORENOSIATNVC
NEEDIOTNMISTA
GNEARTDOWRU
OATONMINICTN
TTIENAR
RTEE
TILRLNOPOA

answers on p.7





New Conservation Projects Technician

The Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has a new staff member. Jack Slipy was recently hired as the conservation projects technician.



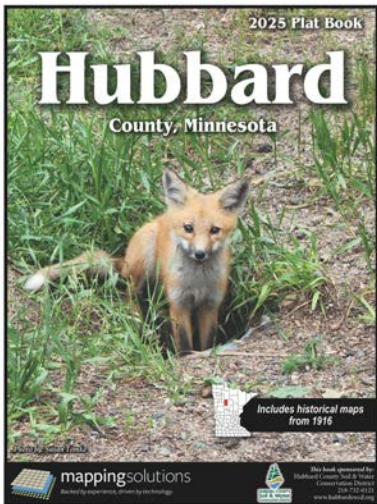
Originally from Princeton, MN, Slipy says, "I recently completed my undergraduate degree in environmental studies at Bemidji State University with an emphasis on ecosystems and a minor in GIS."

He previously worked as the district water quality intern for Hubbard SWCD in the summer of 2024. Working alongside current staff members gave him insight into how an SWCD operates and what their mission within the community is.

"I am a passionate outdoorsman who spends every minute of my free time fishing, hunting, and enjoying the outdoors. I am very excited and grateful for the opportunity to work with the community to conserve the wonderful natural resources that northern Minnesota has to offer."

2025 Plat Book

BY: MEGAN FITZGERALD



Hubbard SWCD is in the process of designing the 2025 Hubbard County plat book. These books are released every three years, and this year's version includes updated plat and aerial imagery as well as archival maps of the townships from 1916. These older maps provide an interesting and sometimes surprising look at land use and ownership over 100 years ago.

The new plat books will be available at the end of April. To purchase a copy, simply stop by the Hubbard SWCD office. They will also be available for purchase at the Hubbard County Auditor's Office, Citizens National Bank of Park Rapids, Laporte Grocery, Northern Bait Co., Smokey Hills Outdoor Store, and Rock Creek General Store.

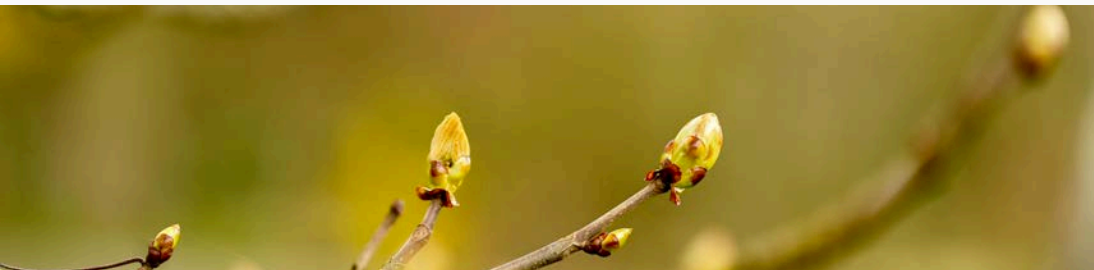
Small-Acre Forestry Opportunities

Traditionally, SWCDs have offered cost share funding for forestry planning on parcels with more than 20 forested acres. Hubbard SWCD has recently secured funding to provide forest stewardship planning and tree plantings on smaller-acre parcels that are located within priority watersheds.

If you feel your property would benefit from these small-acre forestry practices, please contact the SWCD office to see if you are eligible.

Food Forest Garden Kits & Technical Assistance

As part of our effort to promote small-acre forestry, we will be offering food forest garden kits for purchase during our tree distribution. These kits are created from a variety of native species and are designed to fit a range of growing conditions. Contact the SWCD office prior to the tree distribution dates for more details, and to find out how SWCD staff can provide technical assistance for planting.





SUMMER NITRATE TESTING EVENTS

By: Rachel Rudquist

Paul Bunyan Days in Akeley on Friday, June 27th from 6pm - 7pm near Paul's Patio - This will be a drop off event. Please bring your samples in a clean baggie, disposable plastic container, or disposable glass container. Please use a container that you do not want back. We will notify you of your results the following week.

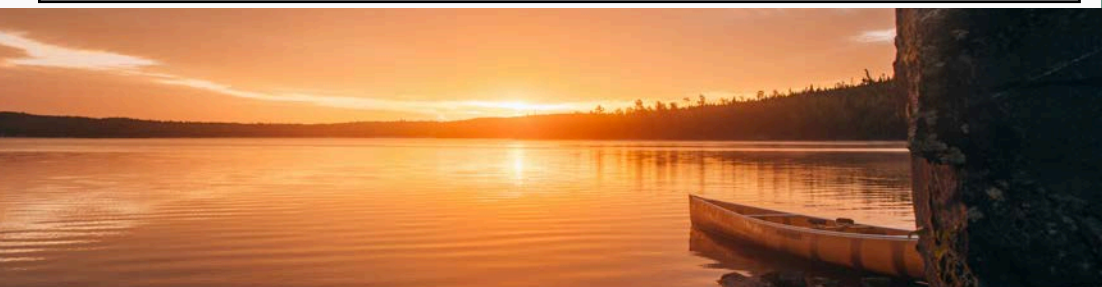
Laporte Independence Days in Laporte on Saturday, June 28th from 9am-12pm near the Lion's Shelter - We will be set up to test at the location. Please bring your sample in a clean baggie, disposable plastic container, or disposable glass container.

Hubbard County Fair in Park Rapids on Friday July 18th from 11am-4pm and Saturday July 19th from 11am-2pm in the environmental building - Please bring your sample in a clean baggie, disposable plastic container, or disposable glass container.

Nitrate is a compound that both occurs naturally and has many human-made sources. Nitrate is in some lakes, rivers, and groundwater in Minnesota. You cannot taste, smell, or see nitrate in water. Consuming too much nitrate can be harmful—especially for babies.

Word Scramble Answer Key:

HABITAT, PROTECT, ENVIRONMENTAL, WATER, EROSION, CONSERVATION, SEDIMENTATION, GROUNDWATER, CONTAMINATION, NITRATE, TREE, POLLINATOR



FREE Nitrate Testing

Do you know what is in the water you are drinking? Hubbard SWCD offers FREE monthly nitrate testing the first Friday of every month from 9-2 at our office located at 603 Central Ave. N Ste 100 Park Rapids, MN 56470. Take your sample the morning of the test. Bring water in a clean container or a Ziploc-type bag. Keep samples cold. If you have a reverse osmosis or a different nitrate removal system, you should take two samples; one before and one after the treatment process. Homeowners with water softeners only need to take one sample, either before or after the water passes through the softener.

Maybe you didn't know that we also have testing kits at our office for Bacteria, Arsenic, Iron, Lead, Fluoride, Copper, Magnesium, Calcium, Hardness, and Manganese.

There is a charge for these tests as well as a courier fee.

Testing drop off is only available Monday - Thursday and you must use bottles from RMB Environmental Laboratories, Inc.

We have those kits available. Stop in and we can help you.

SWCD FOCUS



HUBBARD COUNTY
Soil & Water
Conservation District

603 North Central Ave N
Park Rapids, MN 56470

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Park Rapids, MN
Permit #21

Future Events and Outreach:

Are you in a group interested in conservation and forest management practices? If so, we may have funds available to present and provide information relative to your forests, wetlands, and more.

Please contact us if you would like us to come speak at a community group, church, restaurant, or meeting near you!

Our Office:

603 North Central Ave N
Park Rapids, MN 56470
www.hubbardswcd.org
(218) 732-0121 ext. 4



Virtual Lab:

Our Online Virtual Lab has a wide variety of environmental educational topics. Check how you can be involved through our Citizen Science page!



Our Supervisors:

Heidi Anderson-Thomas,
Board Chair
Don Rettinger, Vice Chair
Lynn Goodrich, Secretary
Don Sells, Treasurer
Marcel Noyes, PR & I

SWCD Staff:

Crystal Mathisrud
District Manager
Crystal.hcswcd@gmail.com

Brandon Spain-Brist
District Forester
Brandon@hubbardswcd.org

Jake Shaughnessy
Watershed Planner/Coordinator
Jake@hubbardswcd.org

Jack Slipy
Conservation Project Technician
Jack@hubbardswcd.org

Megan FitzGerald
Community Engagement & Grant
Reporting Coordinator
Megan@hubbardswcd.org

Rachel Rudquist
Administrative and Bookkeeping
Assistant
Rachel@hubbardswcd.org

NRCS Staff:

Alicia Laternus
alicia.laternus@usda.gov

Dan Pazdernik
daniel.pazdernik@usda.gov