



HUBBARD COUNTY Soil & Water Conservation District

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2026 Report

Nuturing the Forests, Protecting the Shorelines



Board of Supervisors

District 1: Don Rettinger

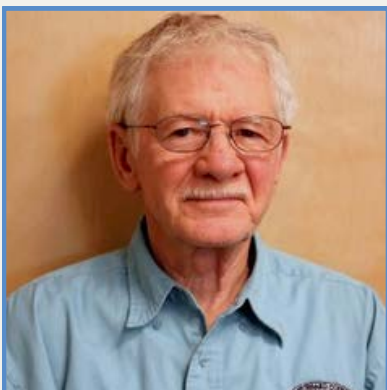


District 2: Marcel Noyes



District 3: Vacant

District 4: Don Sells



District 5: Lynn Goodrich



Want to Become a Supervisor?

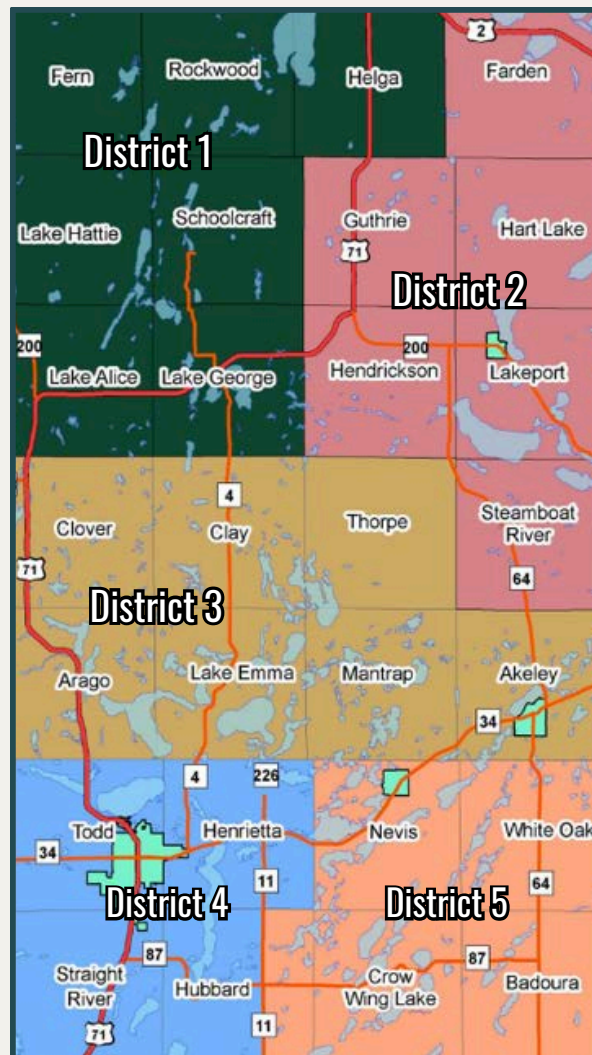
Want to be an SWCD Supervisor?

Who should run? Minnesota citizens interested in influencing natural resource 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.

District 3 is currently vacant. Reach out to the District to inquire about serving on the Hubbard SWCD Board.



Hubbard SWCD Staff

Jake Shaughnessy
Programs & Partnerships
218-252-5391

My Purpose at Hubbard SWCD

I work with the district technicians and district partners to develop conservation programs and implement conservation projects. I also act as the front-facing representative to the community and partners.

Rachel Rudquist
Office & Finance Manager
218-252-5725

My Purpose at Hubbard SWCD

I make sure we have what is needed to run the office effectively. I pay vendors, cost share projects, payroll, and help with board meetings. I also help with the spring tree sale program.

Grant Helgestad
Forestry Technician
218-252-6987

My Purpose at Hubbard SWCD

I work alongside landowners to protect and enhance the forests of Hubbard County. My goal is to equip landowners via collaboration, mutual education, and project implementation to steward their land for the next generation.

Megan FitzGerald
Administration & Grants
218-252-2483

My Purpose at Hubbard SWCD

I administer the many grants and funding sources that support SWCD operations. This includes grant writing, compliance assurance, budgeting, and reporting.

Jack Slipy
Agriculture & Programs Coordinator
218-252-6981

My Purpose at Hubbard SWCD

I work directly with the valued agriculture producers of Hubbard County to integrate conservation-minded practices into their operations. By offering financial assistance to the producers of the county, we are able to aid producers in changing their operations to be more conservation-minded.

Ray Anderson
District Technician
218-252-6943

My Purpose at Hubbard SWCD

I partner with local landowners to safeguard Hubbard County's precious water resources. From controlling shoreline erosion to establishing protective vegetation buffers, I help turn a passion for conservation into practical, on-the-ground solutions.



Priority Concerns

The priority concerns in Hubbard County have been developed through the One Watershed, One Plan and local planning processes. Each 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 which include the following:

- 1) **Drinking water protection** - implement agricultural best management practices and well sealing.
- 2) **Agricultural land management** - implement agricultural best management practices for drinking water and surface water protection as well as soil health benefits.
- 3) **Landscape protection** - permanently protect land through conservation easements and the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA).
- 4) **Shoreland management** - implement lakeshore/riparian enhancement and promote preservation of natural shorelines.
- 5) **Forest and plant health** - implement forest management best practices and forest management plans for private forests.
- 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 the landscape and projects implemented to protect our resources into the future.

Projects Summary

The Hubbard SWCD has contributed grant funds and technical expertise to private landowners, townships, and various other partners to accomplish the work highlighted in this document. This includes a mix of outreach education.

Conducted ~215 site visits or spoke at events to provide technical assistance and recommendations to over 1,500 landowners. These include a mix of forestry, shoreline, and agriculture-focused programs.

Implemented seven agricultural best management practices on 1,174 acres for drinking water and surface water protection as well as soil health.

Hosted monthly nitrate clinics along with clinics at various community events including the County Fair, Laporte Independence Days, and more. A total of 360 wells were tested for nitrates.

Sealed four abandoned wells to protect ground water.

Facilitated the creation of 44 forest stewardship plans on 7,800 acres for enrollment in protection programs such as the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) and conservation easements.

Completed five shoreline restoration and stabilization projects on 854 linear feet of shoreline. Conducted site visits and plan designs for an additional 61 shoreline properties and attended various lake association events. These efforts reached 560 individuals in the county.

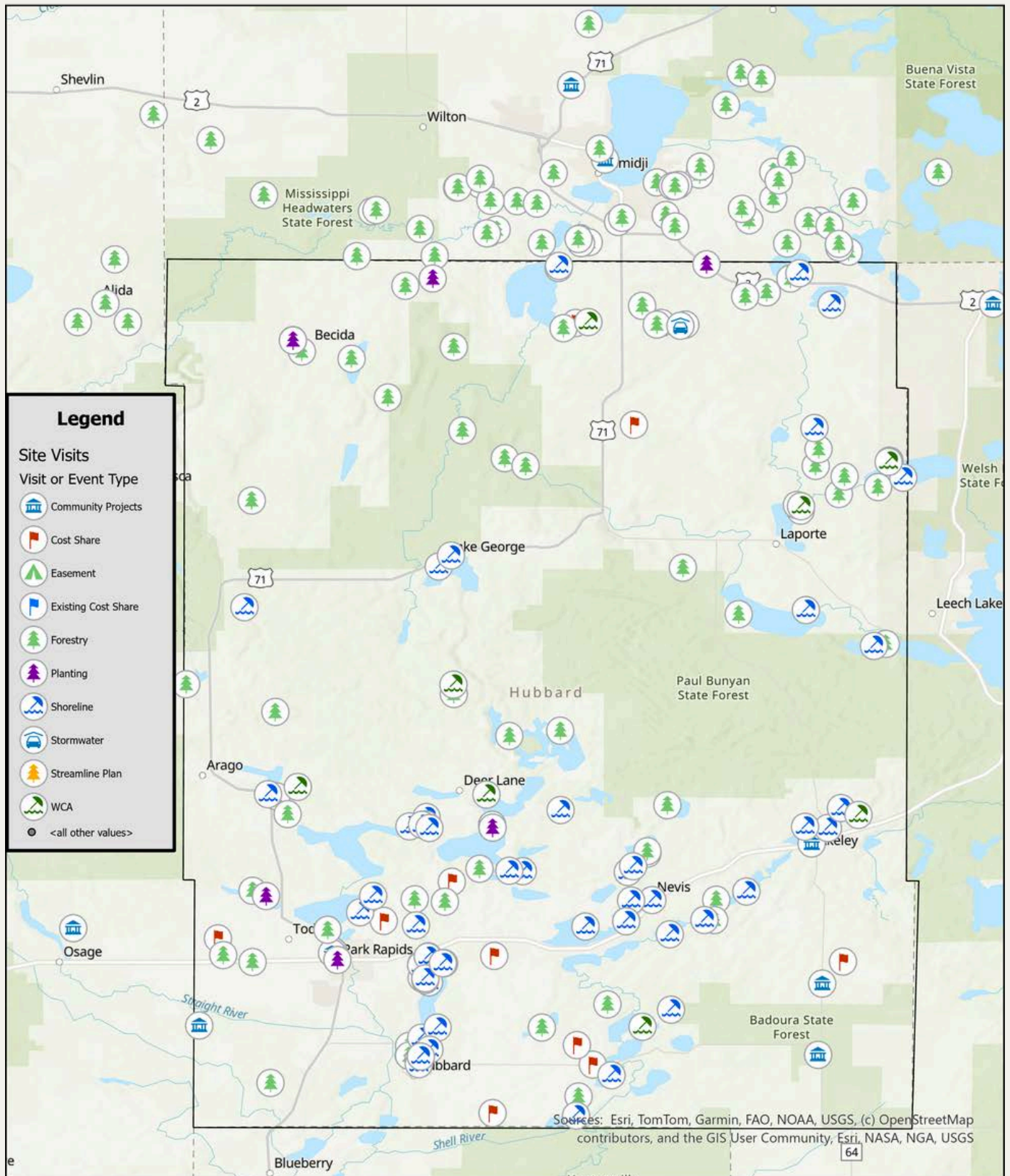
Completed three stream crossing projects addressing various erosion, stream function, and fish passage issues.

Conducted eight tree planting projects which planted ~14,600 trees and reforested 35 acres of land.

Hosted and attended outreach and education events including Freshwater Festival, Grazing Workshop, and lake association meetings, totaling over 550 individuals reached.

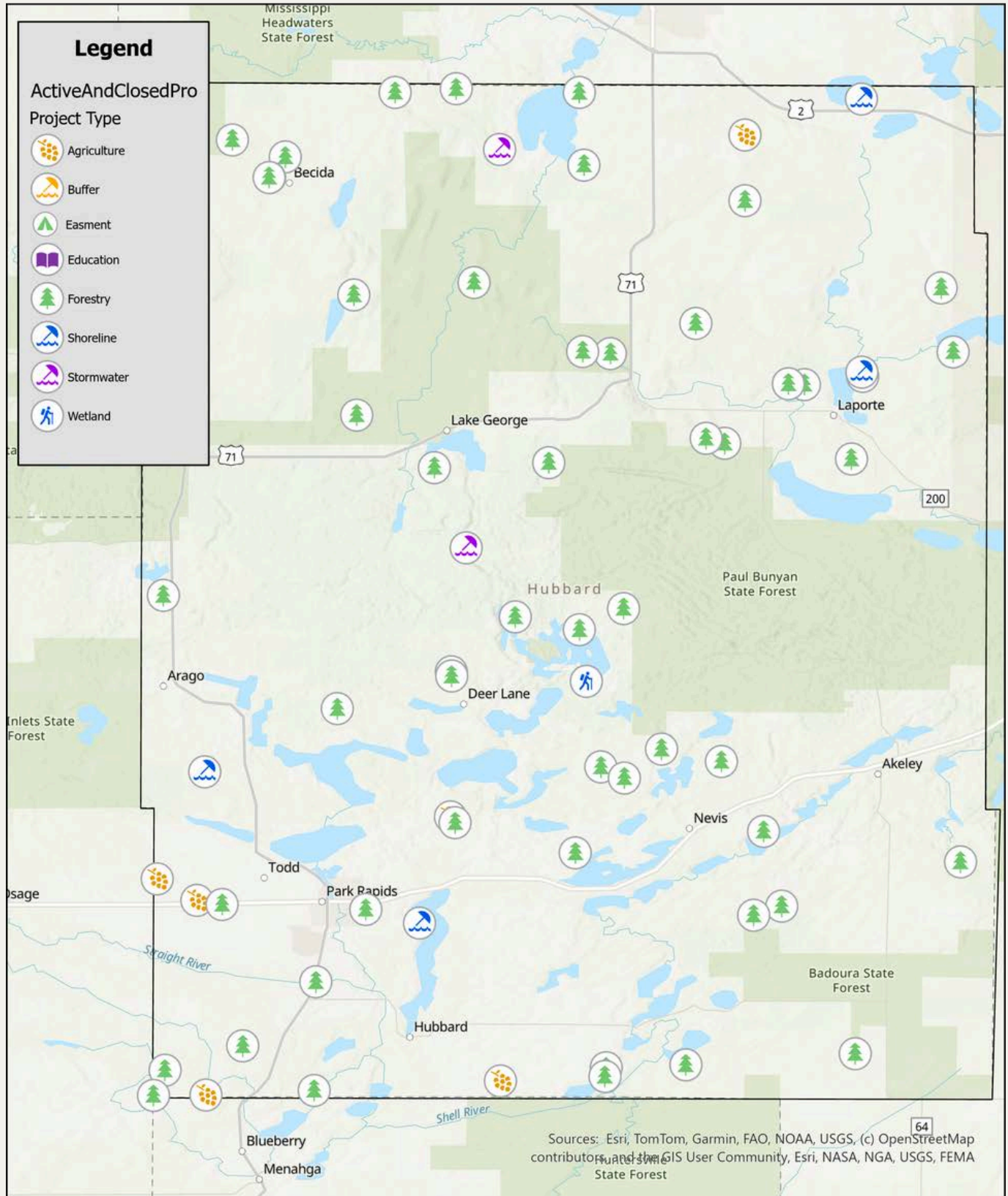
Site Visit Summary

Site Visits and Events Fiscal Year 2026



Projects Summary

Active and Closed Projects Fiscal Year 2026



Cost Share Program Summary

Hubbard Soil and Water Conservation District runs a variety of programs that can partially offset the cost of landowners implementing conservation practices. We work on a wide variety of landscapes including agriculture, shoreline, forests, and urban land uses. The table below lists our current programs. If you are unsure if your project would fit into one of our programs, please reach out. Project funding is limited and Hubbard SWCD considers high-priority projects first. If you have a project you're interested in completing where financial assistance would help, call us at 218-366-9920 to learn more about applying for a cost share program.

Agricultural Soil Tests	100% up to \$200/year
Cover Crops	\$40 per acre
No-Till	\$40 per acre
Pasture and Hay Planting	50% or 75%, depending on land use
Shoreline Buffer and Shoreline Restoration	50% to 75%, depending on land use
Private Forest Management Plans for SFIA/Easements/BMPs	50% to 75%, depending on plan type and enrollment
Stormwater	50% to 75%, depending on project cost and impact
Shoreland Restoration or Buffer Planting	50%
Abandoned/Unused Well Sealing	50%
Erosion Reduction Projects	50% to 75%, depending on project cost and impact



Land Protection



Hubbard SWCD works with landowners interested in implementing conservation practices and programs that support landscape and water protection goals. These include forestry and easement programs like SFIA, 2c, and RIM. These programs maintain beneficial land uses like forests and natural shorelines.



Protecting the landscape is key to keeping Hubbard County's surface and ground water clean. Watersheds with over 25% disturbance have been shown to have negative impacts on surface water quality. Keeping landscapes in beneficial uses like forests, wetlands, or natural shorelines all help protect the water quality of the lakes and rivers we enjoy. If you are interested in protecting your land, reach out and see if there is a program right for you!

Results

Habitat Protected - ~8,500 acres

Shoreline/Streambank Protected - ~22,000 feet



Agricultural Projects



In 2025-2026, Hubbard SWCD has been working diligently to develop and improve our agriculture program. By improving the agriculture program, the SWCD aims to increase the offerings available to the producers of Hubbard County. Through these efforts, the agriculture program has taken off significantly. Hubbard SWCD has spoken to over 50 landowners regarding agriculture practices, and many conservation-minded agriculture practices have been put into place throughout the county. The practices receiving the most focus have been cover crops, no-till, and reforestation of old agricultural land. Below are the some real-life success stories from these efforts.

Cover Crops

- **Total Contracts: 7**
- **Total Acres Planned/Planted: 1,177.25 acres**

Pollution Reduction Estimate

- **Nitrogen: 1,492 lbs/yr**
- **Phosphorus: 66 lbs/yr**
- **TSS: 15 tons/yr**



(Above): Bare, sandy soils left uncovered after harvest. Sites like these are extremely susceptible to wind erosion. This site has been freshly seeded with a cover crop.

(Left): A similar field that has an established cover crop, providing both protection from erosion and soil health benefits.



Shoreland Projects



Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District provides technical assistance and initial site visits to county landowners, identifying natural resource concerns and evaluating tailored conservation solutions for private property. When funding opportunities align, district staff develop customized project designs and manage cost-share applications to lower financial barriers for landowners. HCSWCD manages shoreline services from the initial site inspection through final implementation, overseeing conservation work to ensure practices effectively mitigate erosion, stabilize shorelines, and protect local soil and water quality.



Beyond shoreline protection, the Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District provides a broad range of technical and community services. Staff regularly monitor regional water quality through probe testing and conduct targeted sampling for aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussel veligers. HCSWCD further strengthens community relations and watershed protection by attending local events and lake association meetings, providing property owners with reliable water quality data, technical advice, and opportunities for collaborative stewardship.



Starting in the summer of 2025, Long Lake piloted the shoreline protection program, through which residents are informed about examples of poor practices for shorelines. This program's goal is to recognize landowners who are conducting best management practices. HCSWCD has been slowly expanding this program to other lake associations in the area. Landowners who meet the standards are awarded a Lake Steward sign they can display wherever they choose on their property.

Stream Habitat and Restoration

Proper stream flowage is vital for habitat and stream stability. Hubbard SWCD has partnered with various townships and road authorities to help address problem culverts and stream crossings to address erosion and habitat issues. This often includes realignment and resizing of the culverts. Proper alignment is key to insure proper stream functions. Poorly aligned crossings can cause notable erosion issues due to streams taking sharp turns, while undersized culverts can cause backwatering, in-stream scouring, and excessive velocity. Excessive velocity can restrict aquatic organisms like fish from being able to migrate between waterbodies. Excessive velocity can also cause streambank erosion and development of scour holes, sending excess sediment to downstream waterbodies.



Forestry Projects

Hubbard SWCD continued building its tree planting cost share program. The SWCD worked with six landowners on the design and implementation of tree planting projects for reforestation and forest improvement. The combined footprint of all six projects is around 13 acres. In total, approximately 14,600 trees were planted. Three projects focused on reforestation and three were forest improvement projects.

Reforestation has the goal of restoring forest cover on previously deforested pieces of property. The improvement of existing forest has the goal of building diversity, quality, and resiliency. Examples include replacing trees that were lost in storms and protecting conifers by addressing the lack of natural conifer regeneration present in many portions of the county. These measures aim to ensure that a healthy forest persists for generations to come.

Totals

- **Total Projects: 8**
- **Total Acres Planted: 34.8**
Reforested Acres: 30.4
Improved Acres: 4.4
- **Total Trees Planted: ~ 14,600**



(Above): Trees planted in an area impacted by storm damage.

(Left): A tree planter is used to reforest a hay field at a fall 2025 project site.



Forestry Projects

Reforestation Projects on Agricultural Land

In 2025-2026, Hubbard SWCD not only focused its reforestation efforts on previously forested land, but also on agricultural land that is currently not in use. These projects have the potential for great conservation benefit as they take areas previously void of natural cover and reforest them. This can have water quality benefits, reduce erosion, and increase wildlife habitat. In 2025-2026, one large reforestation project was done near the Straight River in Park Rapids. Several other agricultural land owners looking to reforest were redirected to other funding sources available such as the DNR's Field to Forest Program.



Above: Aerial photos of a 9,700 tree reforestation project near the Straight River in Park Rapids, Minnesota.

New Hubbard SWCD Tree Planter



Above: The Hubbard SWCD's tree planter, purchased in spring of 2026, is being used to increase planting efficiency.

Forestry Projects

Deer present a major challenge when planting trees in Hubbard County. Most native tree species are browsed by deer. Protective measures give planted seedlings the greatest chance of survival.

Examples of deer protection installed at our projects include:

- Browse Blockers (left)
- Bud caps (center)
- Tree tubes (top right)



Restoration within existing woodlands has many benefits, such as the protection and retention of valuable and culturally significant species.

(Left): Selective planting of conifers to build diversity.
(Bottom): Conifers were planted in a gap made by the removal of thick brush that was preventing the regeneration of the forest.



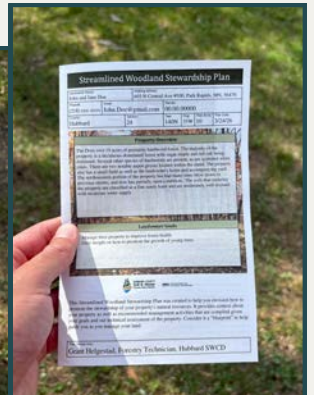
Streamlined Plans

In 2025, Hubbard SWCD began writing small-acre forest management plans. Most federal, state, and local forestry programs are directed toward landowners with 20 acres or more. Streamlined forest stewardship plans aim to bridge the gap and provide education and technical recommendations for small-acre landowners. Though their individual footprints are small, the collective stewardship and management of these properties has a major impact on protecting forest health, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

To date, 24 plans have been returned to landowners. The total footprint of the properties covered by these plans is 111 acres, with an average property size of 5.1 acres. Many of these properties are on the water and collectively span hundreds of feet of shoreline along 11 lakes and one river, giving landowners in these critical areas the tools to better protect Hubbard County's exceptional water resources.

Examples of Plan Topics:

- Forest health
- Pollinator habitat
- Tree planting
- Wildlife habitat
- Erosion



(Above): Streamlined Plans are short and to the point, addressing the condition of the property and providing recommendations that anyone can implement, even without previous familiarity with management.

(Left): When enough small-acre properties are managed for environmental quality, larger blocks of healthy forest begin to form in high-impact localities.

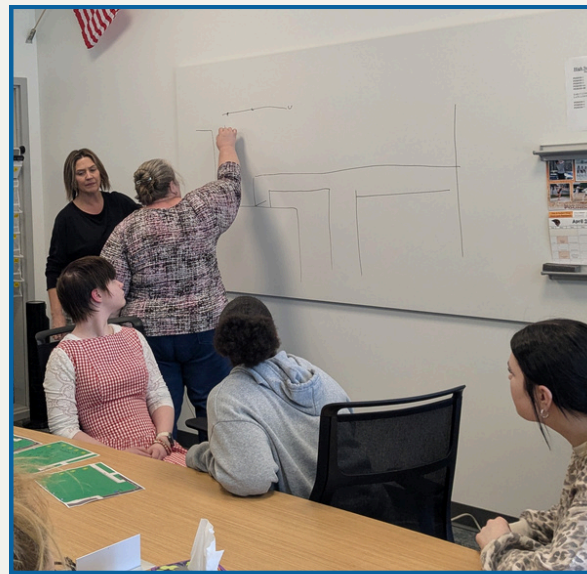
Bernick's Family Foundation Grant



Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded a Bernick's Family Foundation grant to connect youth with the outdoors and foster foundational skills for future natural resource careers.

The SWCD is leveraging its established youth programming including seed and cone collection, community forestry initiatives, pollinator workshops, and the annual Freshwater Festival to deliver hands-on, career-focused environmental education.

With support from the Bernick's Family Foundation, Hubbard SWCD partnered with county schools to establish pollinator gardens and edible food forests featuring fruit-bearing trees and shrubs. These living classrooms provide students with hands-on outdoor learning spaces and direct opportunities to harvest local produce.



With funding wrapping up at the end of 2026, the SWCD's final phase centers on establishing these projects as permanent fixtures in the district's ongoing youth outreach. Although grant support is coming to a close, the installed food forests and pollinator habitats will remain lasting community assets, offering hands-on learning opportunities for years to come.



Outreach Events

Hubbard SWCD actively engages the local community every year by hosting and participating in outreach events. These events help introduce area residents of all ages to conservation and natural resource topics.

Grazing Workshop

Every February, Hubbard SWCD offers an educational workshop for local livestock producers. The event is free to the public and is supported by donations from local vendors and educators. Presenters speak about agricultural best management practices, covering everything from cattle handling and care to rotational grazing and much more.



Freshwater Festival

The Freshwater Festival is an annual event held at Camp Wilderness Boy Scout Camp. Over 250 6th grade students from surrounding schools attend with 19 presenters, 11 stations, and over 20 volunteers.



Each class rotates through multiple stations where individual presenters share their expertise on various conservation topics. In 2026, presentations were given by local DNR, HCCOLA, Headwaters Science Center, county foresters, University of MN Extension, Mantrap Lake Association, and Hubbard SWCD employees.

This event requires a lot of volunteers, and we couldn't put it on without the assistance of local assistance and financial help from the Local Water Management Plan, Bernick's Community Grant, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, HCCOLA, and many more organizations and individuals who donate to make this such a special event. At the end of the day, every student goes home with fun memories and their own tree to plant.

How Can We Help You?

Hubbard Soil and Water Conservation District offers both technical and financial support. Below are just some of the topics we can help you with, and the best staff person to contact for assistance in that area.

Ray Anderson 218-252-6943 ray@hubbardswcd.org	• Shoreland buffer plantings or restoration designs to prevent or stop erosion • Conservation easement programs • Educational events
Jack Slipy 218-252-6981 jack@hubbardswcd.org	• Agricultural conservation programs • Cover crops • No-till • Cattle operations
Grant Helgestad 218-252-6987 grant@hubbardswcd.org	• Tree planting projects • Small-acre forestry plans • Forest stewardship plans for SFIA and 2c
Jake Shaughnessy 218-252-5391 Jake@hubbardswcd.org	• Stormwater • Engineered projects • General program information • Wetland Conservation Act • Well sealing





HUBBARD COUNTY Soil & Water Conservation District

www.HubbardSWCD.org

1-218-366-9920

MISSION

The purpose of the Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District is to conserve, protect, and enhance the soil and water resources of Hubbard County by providing leadership, education, and assistance.

VALUES

Conservation, Collaboration, Stewardship, and Integrity

Mailing Address

603 North Central Ave, Suite 100
Park Rapids, MN 56470

Physical Address

603 North Central Ave, Suite 100
Park Rapids, MN 56470

