

Fillmore SWCD Soil Health eLINK Report

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January 1 – December 31, 2015

FY2014 SE MN Soil Health Providing Accelerated Technical Assistance C14-6698; sub contract with Fillmore SWCD to implement. \$250,000 is available from FY2014 thru BWSR (which expires December 31 2016 and is reported by Feb. 1 of each year). A 25% local match (\$62,500) is required, with \$29,700 from local cash and \$32,800 from In-Kind sources. Funds provided on a 50%/40%/10% basis. . \$248,500 is designated for Fillmore SWCD (\$6000 for Education & Information, \$242,500 for Technical Assistance); and \$1500 designated for the JPB for Administration. The 1st 50% was received and \$124,250 was paid to Fillmore SWCD and \$750 to the JPB. Fillmore SWCD hired Dean Thomas for this program as a Soil Health Technician.

Fillmore SWCD spent \$56,060.56 from this grant from January 1 thru December 31 2015, and \$9,650 in local cash was received and spent. This leaves a balance of \$166,914.18

The JPB spent \$518.88 of their \$1500 from this grant from January 1 thru December 31 2015. This leaves a balance of \$680.01.

A 25% local match is required (\$62,500) as noted above. Match provided from 1/1/2015 thru 12/31/2015 totaled \$130,192 (8800+111,670+9722). This leaves a match obligation of \$0.00 match.

January 1 – December 31, 2105

The Area Soil Health Technician assisted over 50 producers with seeding 3653 acres of cover crops funded through EQIP contracts totaling \$194,427 in Area 7. Many of those producers who worked with the Soil Health Technician seeded an additional 6,668 acres on their own at an estimated out-of-pocket cost of \$111,670. Many others have contacted him for cover crop advice.

- He serves on two Soil Health Teams: Freeborn County (attended five meetings and a teleconference) and Mower/Fillmore (attended two planning meetings).
- He has helped organize and/or presented information on soil health at 15 meetings and conferences and at nine field days. One of the field days was organized with a Farmer Champion funded by a National Wildlife Federation Cover Crop Champion Grant. The grant included funding to support the Soil Health Technician's staff time.
- He participated in statewide teleconferences for Grazing Specialists (4) and for the Grazing Lands Conservation Association-GLCA-(6).
- He is providing technical assistance on an LCCMR grant awarded to BWSR to set up cover crop demonstrations with farmers in southeast Minnesota. The project includes an economic analysis of cover crop use in various farming operations. There have been two meetings and two conference calls for the project. He helped develop a project fact sheet and a landowner contract for incentive payments. He is in the process of making landowner contacts for the demonstration sites.
- He works closely with NRCS staff on CSP enhancements and EQIP standards and RMA guidelines for soil health practices. He has helped with evaluating the Haney test. He developed cover seeding plans on over 22,500 acres (14,900 acres aerial seeded) and conducted status reviews for EQIP

contracts (almost 20,000 acres). He compiled a seed dealer and custom hire list for producers to use. He is working on three EQIP grazing projects in Winona County. He attended EQIP Local Work Group meetings in Mower and Fillmore counties.

- He provides technical assistance on the Root River One Watershed, One Plan Advisory Committee and on the MDA Field to Stream Partnership project.
- He contacted cooperators about continued participation in the SE MN lysimeter network and attended the project meeting on April 24th.
- He assisted with publishing six issues of the Grazing Gazette which goes out to over 1200 people.
- Cash contributions were received from 13 organizations, canning companies, and SWCDs to support the Soil Health Technician position.

April 3 to December 31, 2014

Fillmore SWCD spent \$25,525.26 from this grant from April 3 thru December 31 2014, and \$9,650 in local cash was received and spent. This leaves a balance of \$222,974.74.

The JPB spent \$301.11 of their \$1500 from this grant from April 3 thru December 31 2014. This leaves a balance of \$1,198.89.

A 25% local match is required (\$62,500) as noted above.. Match provided from 4/3/2014 thru 12/31/2014 totaled \$18,442 (9650+560+8232). This leaves a match obligation of \$44,058 match.

Soil Health Technician: April 3 - December 31, 2014

The Soil Health Technician assisted producers with signing up for EQIP cover crop practices: 31 producers in Fillmore County for 1883.73 acres (\$106,227.00); 5 in Wabasha County for 509.8 acres (\$40,520.00); and 1 in Mower County for 235.0 acres (\$19,183.00). He conducted spot checks on over 3600 acres of cover crops in Fillmore, Mower, and Wabasha counties and worked on a seeding plan for a Wabasha County producer and an aerial seeding plan for a Rice County producer. He helped develop NRCS standards for cover crops/seeding and worked with NRCS staff to develop cover crop recommendations for the RMA standards. He helped organize and presented information for seven field days and meetings, including one on August 22nd with CPS to demonstrate a Rowbot for seeding cover crops in standing corn (70 people attended). He hosted a training for NRCS and SWCD Area 6 staff at his farm on July 16th on precision Ag and rotational grazing (60 people attended). He conducted prescribed grazing checks for EQIP: 552 acres for 9 producers in Fillmore County whose payments totaled \$20,424.00 and 236.5 acres for 4 producers in Winona County whose payments totaled \$8,750.50. He revised two grazing plans. He worked with nine producers in Fillmore, Houston, Olmsted and Winona counties to install grazing practices (pipelines, fence, frost seeding, heavy use protection) and conducted spot checks on 13 grazing contracts covering 1028 acres in Winona and Fillmore counties. No new grazing plans were done this year due largely to uncertain economics related to the cattle industry. He assisted NRCS with standards for grazing and out wintering. He attended the EQIP

local work group meetings in four counties and attends the Freeborn County soil health meetings. He helped plan and attended the National Grazing Land Coalition Initiative tour in Minnesota which visited 3 grazing farms. He works with Extension and NRCS to distribute the Grazing Gazette, which goes out to over 1000 producers in three states every other month. He also contributed to the state grazing newsletter. He participates in the teleconferences for grazing specialists around the state, as well as the National Grazing Coalition, Midwest Perennial Working Group, and GLCI.