

# Cultivating Conservation

Vol. 2, No. 1



A publication of the  
Cannon River Watershed Partnership

## Trout Brook Watershed and the Dakota SWCD

Trout Brook is a tributary to the Cannon River located in southeast Dakota County. Trout Brook has been identified by the MPCA as impaired for turbidity. The land surrounding the Trout Brook area is comprised of Karst topography, steep sloped bluffs and dominated by agriculture. The lands within the watershed leaves it susceptible to flashy runoff and downstream gully erosion. A number of landowners on the downstream end of the watershed approached the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) about fixing extreme gully erosion issues on their properties. The size and scope of on-site fixes proved to be cost-prohibitive and difficult to maintain without control of upstream land use and water runoff retention measures.

The SWCD segmented the Trout Brook watershed into 7 sub-watersheds and began surveying and assessing properties upstream from the significant gully erosion locations. This effort was done to identify less expensive conservation practices that could effectively meter peak flow and runoff during rainfall and snow melt events, and therefore reduce the possibility for downstream gully erosion. Rather than waiting for individuals to contact the SWCD separately, the SWCD approached the affected upstream landowners from each sub-watershed collectively to review the identified practices and gauge their individual interest. This collective approach was relatively successful, as nearly all of the landowners agreed to install some type of runoff reduction practice on their property. In 2010 the North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (NCRWMO), in partnership with the SWCD, was awarded a \$150,000 Clean Water Fund grant from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources to provide technical assistance and cost-share for installation of runoff reduction practices within the watershed. These

projects will be designed and installed in the fall of 2010 and 2011. The SWCD will also continue to work with the NCRWMO to conduct baseline water quality monitoring in the Trout Brook Watershed to examine the overall effectiveness of the conservation practices installed.

**Brian Watson and Brad Becker**  
Dakota SWCD

For more information on NCRWMO, please contact:  
Brad Becker, Administrator c/o Dakota County SWCD  
4100 220th St. W., Suite 102, Farmington, MN 55024  
Phone: (651) 480-7777  
E-mail: [brad.becker@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:brad.becker@co.dakota.mn.us)

## What's Manure Worth?

The Cannon River Watershed Partnership would like to invite those of you who make manure management decisions to participate in the "What's Manure Worth?" education workshop **Feb 10th, in Cannon Falls**. The workshop will be lead by Jose Hernandez from the University of Minnesota Extension program. This is a **FREE** workshop that only takes a few hours. Please see the back of the list of events at the back of the newsletter for details on location, time, and how to register.



*A field with recently applied manure from a Honey Warrior.*

## Conservation Corner: Trash is Beautiful

By Austin Bly

Delmar and Barbara Hinck will be among the first to tell you about the value of no-till farming. Before Delmar's time, when Delmar's father moldboard plowed just like everyone else, all the top soil would be left exposed and black. A stream that runs through their land would erode a lot of the top soil after heavy rainfalls. Growing up on the farm, Delmar remembers seeing how murky the stream would become.

Delmar followed in his father's footsteps with the same dairy production, but when their dairy barn fell down in the early 80s Delmar and Barb decided to switch to a corn-soybean rotation. With the money from the herd buy-out, they were able to eventually purchase two no-till drills.

The Hincks have accomplished a number of other conservation projects since then. Most recently, he has set aside acres for pine and walnut stands for a total of 48 years. Through the CRP program, the Hincks have been able to install a 130 foot buffer along a portion of the stream that runs through their land. They have seen an increase of wildlife in the area, with new populations of pheasant, trout, deer, and bald eagles--none of which had existed on their land before.



*Chris Hinck, John Jaeger, Barbara and Delmar Hinck. Jaeger presented the Hincks with the Conservation Farmer award .*

The land that Delmar, Barb, and their son Chris, own totals 1400 acres, which is no-tilled land. They also do custom work on another 1500 acres of land. This past year, the Hincks have begun to use a Turbo-Till on their hybrid corn stalks. The Turbo-Till is able to cut up and provide a consistent spread of the corn stalks across the field, leaving plenty of residue on top and a great seed bed for planting. With their Turbo-Till, they have been able to avoid problems that arise with typical no-till drills. The soybean is able to grow fine through the residue and the machinery isn't clogged either. Delmar said that the corn can leave behind annoying root balls that can interfere with the equipment, but with the Turbo-Till there are no more root balls.



*The Turbo-Till in action from the producer's website  
([www.greatplainsmfg.com](http://www.greatplainsmfg.com)).*

Goodhue County's Conservation Farmers of the Year in 2010. Goodhue County has been honoring conservation farmers since 1961.

Overall, the Hincks have been very aware of how their production system on the land is directly connected to the water system. They know that by conserving the land, they are simultaneously preserving the quality of water in the area. So while some might scoff at the idea of finding a nice layer of "trash" on the field, Delmar thinks it is a beautiful thing.

# River-Friendly Farmer Follow-Up Survey Results

By Austin Bly

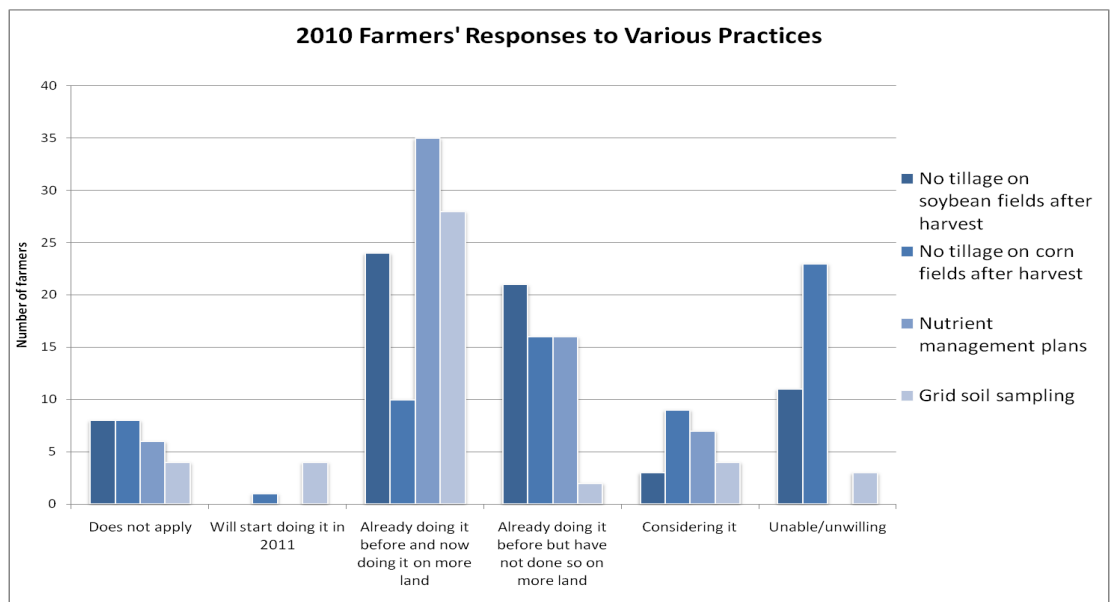
The Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) has a long history of working with farmers and others involved in agriculture in our watershed. In 2008, the Cannon River Watershed Partnership met with 200 farmers to learn about their practices and encourage them to be “river friendly farmers.” Farmers in the program were given a toolkit to help them make production decisions that would lessen the burden on the Cannon River Watershed. Since then, there was a survey conducted in early 2009, as well as an additional follow-up survey conducted in the past few months among the same participants.

With multiple surveys conducted among the same farmers within the watershed, the CRWP has been able to examine with statistics how helpful the River Friendly Farmer (RFF) toolkit has been. The 2009 survey had 86 participants, while the 2010 survey had 67.

Survey participants were asked several questions, asking how the RFF toolkit and visit with the CRWP staff has changed their production methods in regards to several topics, including no-till on soybean and corn fields, nutrient management plans, grid-soil sampling, and buffers along streams and ditches. By comparing the average answers to these questions, we were able to gauge the affect the RFF project has had.

The project has had the largest impact on farmers’ production decisions when it comes to nutrient management plans and grid soil sampling. Of farmers who participated in the surveys, about 20% more have reported that they are using nutrient management plans or are planning on doing so in the near future. Additionally, there is a 9% increase in the percentage of farmers who report using grid soil sampling.

The results from the 2010 survey also indicate that there has been a slight increase in no tillage on soybean and corn field after harvest. The percentage of farmers doing no-till for both soybean and corn has increased a couple percentage points. The 2009 and 2010 surveys show the average answers are becoming slightly more in favor of no-till practices.



Results of the 2010 survey for questions 1 through 4. These questions asked farmers what actions they have taken for the following practices (listed in the key to the right of the graph).

It should also be taken into consideration that not all participants of the RFF project participated in either of the surveys. Those who answered the survey may be more willing to try new production methods in order to conserve the watershed. However, it should be reasonable to assume that the same “type of farmers” have answered these surveys, allowing to make the comparisons that have been made above.

So, has the RFF project been a success story? We at the CRWP definitely would like to think so. While we advocate that no-till and grid soil sampling (among others) are great ways to help improve the quality of the Cannon River Watershed, we also understand that these methods and tools may not be as useful or realistic for every farmer. What is important is that we have seen measurable success with the program and hope to give other farmers the opportunity to also join the ranks of being “River Friendly Farmers.”

For a full, technical report of the survey results, please visit the CRWP website’s agriculture section, at: [www.crwp.net/agriculture-in-the-watershed/](http://www.crwp.net/agriculture-in-the-watershed/)

## Upcoming Events

The following events include training, conferences, and speakers on conservation agriculture topics that may be of interest to you. Check out the “Events” section on the Cannon River Watershed Partnership’s website ([www.crowp.net](http://www.crowp.net)) for further CRWP events!

**Feb. 7, 2011:** “Sources of Bacteria that Contaminate our Waterways and Beaches—Can we cleanup our Environment?” 7:00 PM, Room 417, U of M Rochester University Square, 111 South Broadway, Rochester MN. Free Admission, Dr. Michael Sadowsky, speaker.

**Feb. 9-10, 2011:** *Conservation Tillage Conference*. Bigwood Event Center, Fergus Falls MN. Hosted by the U of M Extension. To register and for more info, visit [www.tillageconference.com](http://www.tillageconference.com).

**Feb. 10, 2011:** “What’s Manure Worth?” workshop. 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Merchants Bank, 300 Main St. W, Cannon Falls MN. Hosted by the CRWP and Riverland Community College. Registration is free and will reimburse participants up to \$25 for the cost of a recent manure test with presentation of a receipt. Register by calling (507) 786-3916 or emailing [intern@crowp.net](mailto:intern@crowp.net).

**Feb. 15, 2011:** *Nutrient Efficiency and Management Conference*. 8:30 AM to 3:45 PM. Rochester International Event Center, 7333 Airport View, Drive SW, Rochester MN. Hosted by the MN Department of Agriculture. Register for free by calling (651) 201-6141.

**March 8, 2011:** 5th Annual Crops Day: Take Charge! 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Held at the Dakota County Extension and Conservation Center, Farmington MN. Contact Phyllis Bongard by calling (651) 480-7757 or emailing [bonga028@umn.edu](mailto:bonga028@umn.edu).

**March 18, 2011:** Commercial Ag Waste Certification Workshop. 12:00 PM. Takes place during the *North American Farm and Power Show*. 4 Seasons Complex, Owatonna MN.

**March 24, 2011:** Organic Crops Day. 2:00 PM. Steele County Community Center, Owatonna MN.

**June 8-9, 2011:** *2011 25th Farm Progress Hay Expo*. 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM both days. Show site located south of Cannon Falls, MN, on 380th St. Admission is free and parking is \$10 per vehicle. For more info, visit [www.HayExpo.com](http://www.HayExpo.com) or call (866) 264-7469.

---

Cannon River Watershed Partnership  
8997 Eaves Ave  
Northfield, MN 55057  
*Address Service Requested*

