



Targeting conservation in Rock County

September 2015 Snapshots



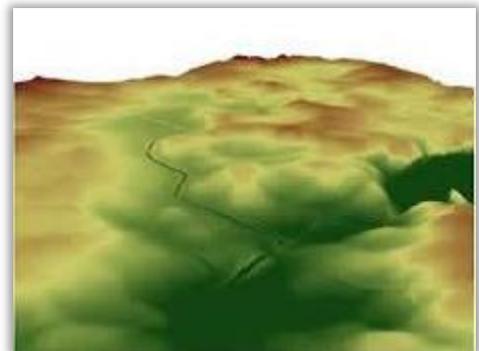
Conservation professionals know that on any given landscape, there are certain areas that are more susceptible to things like erosion and runoff. Finding those sites, however, can be time consuming and labor intensive. Thanks to technological advances and stronger data, targeting sites that are at the greatest risk and implementing practices that can make the most difference on the land has become easier to do.

In 2013, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) awarded a Clean Water Fund Accelerated Implementation Grant (AIG) to the Rock Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to undergo a terrain analysis of the Rock River Watershed. The watershed contains portions of 15 communities in southwest Minnesota and captures water from 556 square miles. For this project, the district used elevation maps to identify locations with a high erosion potential, then combined that data with an analysis of erosion risk based on soil type. This assessment provided them with information used to determine what sites would be most effective for erosion control practices. By identifying and targeting priority resources, the district is able to place practices in the areas of the watershed where they will make the most difference.

In 2015, Rock SWCD was awarded an additional \$68,500 in Clean Water Fund AIG support to build on the progress made from the first terrain analysis. The additional grant funds will allow them to expand that analysis to cover the entirety of Rock County. Waters that are in poor condition are labeled 'impaired,' and using the data from the analysis the District will be able to better locate where sediment and other contaminants are entering these waters.

The District will be able to determine what conservation practices are most effective at these locations, both in terms of cost and measurable improvement to water quality. Essentially, the district will be able to determine where they can install practices that will give them the biggest bang for the buck, maximizing their grant funds to make the biggest difference for Rock County waters.

"Combined, these Clean Water Fund grants are enabling our District to get conservation practices on the ground where they're needed most to prevent erosion and runoff. We're able to target our work to where it's going to make the most difference, keeping sediment out of the Rock River," says Doug Bos, Rock SWCD Assistant Director. "It's a win-win both for public dollars spent and our water quality."



Terrain analysis, shown in the top picture, helps to identify the most vulnerable spots for erosion and runoff on a landscape. Conservation practices can then be installed at those locations to help prevent flooding and runoff, as indicated in the bottom picture.