

## 'A passionate advocate for conservation'



*Fillmore Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) Administrator Donna Rasmussen accepted the 2018 Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Employee award from Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Executive Director John Jaschke during the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) annual convention Dec. 10 in Minneapolis.*  
**Photo Credit:** Mary Juhl, BWSR

### BWSR honors Fillmore SWCD administrator Donna Rasmussen with 2018 Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Employee Award



Donna Rasmussen has spent her career advancing water quality initiatives in southeastern Minnesota. The Fillmore Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) administrator manages a staff of eight, secures and implements grants, oversees pilot programs, and plays a role in several regional and state conservation programs.

Rasmussen was named 2018 Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Employee during the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts' (MASWCD) annual convention Dec. 10 in Minneapolis.

“Local conservation staff go above and beyond every day to preserve and protect our water and soil resources,” said Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Executive Director John Jaschke, who presented the award

to Rasmussen. “Donna Rasmussen is a top-notch professional and a passionate advocate for conservation not only in Fillmore County, but across the southeast region of Minnesota.”

The Fillmore SWCD administrator since 2008, Rasmussen previously served as Fillmore County’s first water plan coordinator. Two of the eight employees she manages assist multiple SWCDs in the region. Funding for a shared soil health technician was set to expire at the end of 2018, but



*Adam Beilke, BWSR board conservationist, and Donna Rasmussen, Fillmore SWCD administrator, talked Sept. 8, 2017, as they viewed the East Willow Creek Flood Control Project rehabilitation site on the Mensink family's farm in Fillmore County.*

**Photo Credit:** Ann Wessel, BWSR

Rasmussen worked diligently to secure continued funding through a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Collaboration Grant.

“She’s never afraid to take on a new grant to expand the capabilities of the SWCD,” said Fillmore SWCD Board Supervisor Tim Gossman. “Even if she knows it will be a challenge, she’ll tackle it.”

In addition to her work at the SWCD, Rasmussen is involved in area water quality initiatives. She chairs the regional Basin Alliance for the Lower Mississippi in Minnesota (BALMM), which works with state agencies and other partners to coordinate protection and water

quality improvement efforts.

She was instrumental in forming Friends of the Root River, a citizens group, in 2014. The group’s mission: Engage citizens to protect, restore and value the water resources in the Root River Watershed. Rasmussen serves on the seven-member board that oversees the nonprofit.

Rasmussen’s dedication to the Root River Watershed is clear: In addition to her work with Friends of the Root River, she also acts as a day-to-day coordinator for the Root River One Watershed, One Plan partnership. She helped complete its comprehensive watershed management plan in 2016, and

developed a work plan for an \$851,301 Watershed-Based Funding pilot grant for implementation in 2018.

“She really takes pride in her work with conservation,” said Anne Koliha, Fillmore SWCD engineering technician.

Each year, BWSR celebrates the excellent work accomplished by local government staff to advance conservation efforts across the state. In addition to the Outstanding Soil and Water Conservation District Employee award, BWSR presents an Outstanding Watershed District Employee award. Okabena-Ocheda Watershed District Administrator Dan Livdahl received that honor on Nov. 30.