



# Combining forces for “Hands-on” Conservation Training

July 2015 Snapshots

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Successful restoration projects require strong partnerships among staff from multiple sectors, and this holds true for effective training. On May 21<sup>st</sup>, over 40 conservation professionals gathered at the Sherburne History Center in Becker, Minnesota to attend a “hands-on” Native Prairie Seeding and Management Training created through collaboration between staff from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), the Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), the Stearns SWCD, the Minnesota Association of SWCD Employees (Areas 2 and 4), Prairie Restoration Inc., and Minnesota Native Landscapes.

Learning conservation practices hands-on is one of the most effective forms of training. Working together, the shared knowledge, skills and strategies of BWSR and its conservation partners are critical to producing the best possible outcomes for Minnesota’s land and wildlife.

“This training gives technical staff a hands-on experience of what and how native seeding equipment is used and how this information can be relayed to landowners they are working with,” said Jason Selvog of the Stearns County SWCD.



*Gina Hugo from Sherburne SWCD discussing the use of native prairie seed and seed drills.*

Participants included conservationists from SWCD and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical staff that work with landowners on establishing native prairie and implementing conservation programs such as ReInvest in Minnesota (RIM), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Attendees carefully watched field staff from the Sherburne SWCD demonstrate how to use two types of native prairie planting equipment. Throughout the day, Dan Shaw, BWSR’s Landscape Ecologist, and staff from Prairie Restorations, Inc. and Minnesota Native Landscapes, Inc. also presented information about effective restoration practices.

The session wrapped up with a prairie walk where instructors and trainees discussed plant identification and management considerations, two vital aspects of creating and maintaining native prairie.

Many different organizations were instrumental in the success of this training, but they all have a shared ambition: to maintain Minnesota’s beautiful and environmentally important land. Hands-on training plays a key role in achieving this goal.

“Trainings such as this one provide important opportunities for conservationists to learn from experienced restoration professionals and hear different perspectives from their peers about the successes and challenges of their own projects,” said Dan Shaw of BWSR. Similar sessions focusing on engineering practices, stormwater plantings, and restoration management are being discussed to provide additional training opportunities, and to supplement BWSR’s technical outreach efforts.