

# Grant fills longtime forestry training need



Carlton SWCD project sites along a trout stream give conservation workers a firsthand look at riparian buffers during training funded by BWSR, NRCS, Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees



A two-day forestry training in Carlton County early this season featured a firsthand look at streambank-stabilizing conservation practices, tree-and-shrub site preparation and planting methods, and deer-browse control options.

Offered by northeastern Minnesota's Area 3 Technical Training Team and funded by a Technical Training Acceleration grant, the late-May session filled a long-standing need.

The Technical Training and Certification Program (TTCP) established area technical training teams and made grants of up to \$10,000 available in 2018. The grants are funded by the TTCP, a partnership among the Minnesota Association

of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD), the Minnesota Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE), NRCS and BWSR.

Local staff with technical expertise to develop and lead priority trainings for area employees can use the grants. From the start, Area 3 prioritized forestry training as an area-wide need.

The session that began May 30 was the third in a series of trainings the Area 3 Technical Training Team has offered through technical training acceleration grants. Team members include BWSR, NRCS, SWCD and Technical Service Agency (TSA) staff.

*Kelly Smith of the Carlton Soil & Water Conservation District explains a tree planting site preparation technique to forestry training participants in late May in Carlton County. Technical Training Acceleration grants have allowed the Area 3 Technical Training Team to offer three trainings to a total of 73 participants since August 2018.*

**Photo Credits:**  
Kelly Voigt, BWSR

Conservation workers attend technical trainings as a first step in gaining Job Approval Authority (JAA). JAA is a type of certification that allows employees to plan, design and install conservation practices. It recognizes employees' technical competence to independently work on conservation practices that help treat resource concerns such as degraded water quality and erosion.

Certification allows employees to help landowners design and install conservation practices, and treat priority resource concerns.

The forestry training drew 19 participants — including SWCD and NRCS employees plus one forestry technical service provider who is a private contractor. Trainers included NRCS State Forester Celie Borndal, NRCS State Water Quality Specialist Shannon Carpenter, Carlton SWCD forestry technician Kelly Smith, BWSR Regional Training Conservationist Kelly Voigt and Nutrien company representative Dale Sutherland.

Smith led the Carlton Soil & Water Conservation District project site visits. Three of those highlighted SWCD staff efforts to establish riparian buffers along the Midway River, a designated trout stream.



*Michaela Clingaman of the Cook Soil & Water Conservation District looks for the hardwood tree being protected from deer browse inside a tree tube during a late-May Technical Training and Certification Program session in Carlton County.*

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— Phil Larson, Cook Soil & Water Conservation District

Generally speaking, forested riparian buffer conservation practices establish trees along river and stream corridors. In the case of trout streams, trees are essential. By casting shade, trees help to keep the water cool enough to support trout.

Trainees saw and discussed site preparation, tree planting methods, deer-

browse protection options and competition control techniques on several sites. One stop illustrated flood and ice-scour damage — situations that challenge or preclude establishment of a riparian forest buffer.

During the site visits, one landowner credited his willingness to establish a riparian buffer on his property to financial and

technical assistance plus good communication with SWCD staff. The landowner said one day he'd like to see his section of the Midway River fully reforested.

Trainees learned about NRCS practice standards and specifications for riparian forest buffers, and tree and shrub site preparation and establishment. Other presentations focused on stream corridor resource concern assessments, agroforestry chemicals, pesticide screening for environmental effects, NRCS' Web Soil Survey (WSS) reports, and meeting practice objectives with tree and shrub species selection.

“There is powerful information available to help us do our jobs. As newer employees, it is important to learn more about the resources available to us,” Phil Larson of Cook SWCD said of the training.

Comments from others stated the value of site visits, and of talking to colleagues about lessons learned during project implementation.

The Area 3 Technical Training Team's previous grant-funded trainings included a two-day Forest Ecology and Management session in August 2018, and Shoreland Restoration in January. Combined, the three offerings reached 73 people.