

# FOSTER COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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*"Fostering" Our Natural Resources*

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FOSTER COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# Conservation Communicator

## A New Slant on Dirt!

I just read 285 pages entitled "Dirt". Who could write 285 pages about dirt? Secondly, who would read it? Well, I just did an incredible thing for you. I read it and took out 10 points that I felt were worth passing on. You can thank me later.

- #1. Soil is an intergenerational resource. Pass it on to your kids or not.
- #2. Earthworms make 1/10-1/4" of soil per year across the earth. Your fields too. (Ever wonder what buried all of those ancient Roman ruins?) They run the soil through their bodies and oops, they add fertilizer in the process.
- #3. Bacteria in the soil hold it together and give it nutrients to pass on to your crops and garden vegetables.
- #4. Fine tilling destroys both worms and bacteria.
- #5. Soil can't get everything from applied fertilizer like the body can't get everything from a vitamin tablet.
- #6. Having a constant cover on our soil protects it from vulnerability to weather events and cyclical climate changes like drought.
- #7. Intensive farming management has wrecked civilizations in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Nile, China, Central America, South America, Greece and Italy and led to eventual starvation of millions of people.
- #8. We are one harvest away from starvation for most of the world today. (Consider this personally as well as a statement affecting the world.)
- #9. Soil scientists are recommending treating our soil as a locally adapted biological system rather than a chemical system. This means making it self-sufficient, able to produce for us a crop with security and not dependent upon additives. They are showing that profit margins are comparable.
- #10. The earth's soil is our bank, our security, ensuring your income stream and food on your table. Help to protect it.

Now's the time to thank me. The book is called "Dirt. The Erosion of Civilizations" by David R. Montgomery, no relation to Cody. Anyway, if you would like to read it, I can lend you mine. And here's the clincher: When the Bonanza farmers arrived in the Red River Valley in 1870, there was 18-24 inches of rich topsoil. Today there remains 6-12 inches. (This from the State Historical Society's North Dakota Studies pamphlet for Spring 2016, by Dr. Barbara Handy-Marchello.)

I love dirt. I have a small portion of the earth that I call mine to protect. Hope you have some success protecting your corner.

Marie Pozarnsky  
SCD Supervisor

*Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* is available at the Carrington Library or it can be checked out from the SCD office. Members of the Board also have copies available to borrow.



## Pollinator Garden Tour

Pollinators are important to the reproduction of 90% of flowering plants and allow or improve production of many food crops. On **August 23**, Foster County Soil Conservation District is holding a backyard conservation event on promoting pollinators in the garden. The tour will begin at the District's lot at the corner of 14th Ave. and 3rd St. N at **7:00 pm**. From there, we will proceed to Dakota Girl Gardens and then to Copper Top Acres, followed by refreshments and discussion. Come and learn what you can do to attract and support pollinators in your yard. For information, please contact the SCD office at **652-2551 x3**. Registration is appreciated but not required.

### Foster County SCD

#### 2016 Supervisors, Advisors and Staff

Chairman Curtiss Klein	701-653-5708
Vice Chair Robert House	674-3606
Supervisor Cody Montgomery	652-5397
Supervisor Karl Hoppe	650-8810
Supervisor Marie Pozarnsky	652-1169
NRCS District Conservationist Paul DuBourt	652-2551 Ext 120
Soil Con. Tech. Nichole Johnson	Ext 121
SCD Manager Dionn Schaaf	Ext 123
SCD Ed. Coordinator Jill Vigasaa	701-799-5488
Foster County Extension Agent Joel Lemer	652-2581

### Till it to me Straight....

- Foster County Soil Conservation District Board meetings are tentatively scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on August 8 and September 12 (2nd Mondays) at the USDA Service Center and 8:30 a.m. on October 3 at the Schoolhouse Café in Grace City. Please contact the district office at 652-2551 to confirm dates and times.
- USDA Service Center will be closed for Labor Day on Monday, Sept. 10 and for Columbus Day on Monday, October 10.
- "Talking Dirt" on KDAK (1600 AM) will be at 8:40 am on August 3, September 7, and October 5 (first Wednesdays).
- Pre-applications for 2017 shelterbelt renovations through the ND Forest Service are due August 15. See [www.ag.ndsu.edu/ndfs/](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/ndfs/)
- Pollinator Garden Tour starts at 7:00 p.m. on August 23rd.

## Midkota Envirothon Team Goes To International Competition

Midkota High School sent two teams to this year's state Envirothon competition. The Midkota "Mustangs" Envirothon Team #1, coached by Gilbert Black, received top honors at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual North Dakota State Envirothon Competition. That event was held at Crystal Springs Bible Camp, May 11-13, 2016. Team members are Joseph Vollmer, Jesse Gilbertson, Carson Quam, Victoria Vollmer, and McKenna Frappier. They went on to represent North Dakota at the National Conservation Foundation Envirothon Competition, in Peterborough, Ontario, July 24-29.

For the state competition, a total of 110 students from around the state were challenged on their knowledge and skills using hands-on testing sites, as they walked through four diverse outdoor trails to see who knew the most about natural resources and the environment. The scores received from a 10-minute oral presentation given before a panel of judges, along with the scores earned on the testing trails, determined the state's winning team. Teams from Minot High School and Bismarck High School took second and third place, respectively. Midkota Team #2, which consisted of Laine Hoyt, Jade Boote, Mikayla Donohue, Justin Edland, and Dan Gleason, took twelfth place in the competition.

The Envirothon is a problem-solving natural resource competition for high school students. Teams consisting of five members in grades 9-12, from a school, organization or club, study in the areas of prairie (forestry), soil, water, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. Team members demonstrate proven concepts of hand-on education combined with the excitement of effective educational tools, which will help our schools to nurture environmentally aware students and meet the immediate need to teach more environmental natural resource education. The Midkota teams were sponsored by Foster County Soil Conservation District. The Envirothon is sponsored by the Sheyenne James RC&D Council in partnership with local, state and federal agencies, organizations, private business and Soil Conservation Districts.



Team #1 L to R: Carson Quam, Jesse Gilbertson, Joseph Vollmer, McKenna Frappier, Victoria Vollmer.

## Resource Planning and Why You Should

This year has been another classic field season full of extreme conditions. Starting out with exceptionally dry, windy conditions gave way to exceptionally wet, hot conditions. Mother Nature is very good at keeping us on our toes and I think these conditions we tend to see more and more often highlights the importance of having a solid conservation plan completed.

You might ask what a conservation plan is. The NRCS is working hard to get back to being the technical leaders in assisting producers in addressing resource issues that have come to plague a lot of our working lands. Whether it be salinity effecting cropland production, lack of quality or quantity of water for livestock, establishing a new field/farmstead windbreak or having a goal of increasing soil organic matter. These are all resource issues we are very good at assisting you in treating.

As human nature tends to dictate, many times we don't recognize an issue until it's a **BIG** issue and the damage has been done. This past fall and spring showed us that while many of our windbreaks and shelterbelts are indeed in need of renovation, very few are being replaced. We are certainly on a road that will lead to increased soil erosion which was on full display all too often during those times. This is a resource concern that **everyone** should be looking at addressing. We are the best farmers and ranchers in the world and it should really get under our skin if soil is blowing from our fields, that's what we work so hard to take care of to ensure there is a future for the farm or ranch.

Our Field Office staff is always willing to visit your field or pasture to help identify possible alternatives to some of these issues. There is nothing better than being able to discuss rangeland productivity with a rancher out in the pasture, to offer ideas for cross-fences, water locations, rotation suggestions, and mineral placement options to name a few. A farmer will never realize the full scale of effects going on in their fields without digging a hole to view what is happening below. I can't tell you how many times a producer's understanding of an issue that they battle on the surface is caused by circumstances below such as collapsed soil structure due to a lack in organic matter from excessive tillage. Having a plan to treat soil compaction and improve field moisture conditions by using less tillage combined with seeding more cover crops for weed suppression and water management can be extremely effective.

Please take time to consider the challenges your farm or ranch is facing today. No matter the challenge, always feel free to call our office to discuss them and allow us to work with you to identify possible solutions.

Thank you for all of your efforts in taking care of our soil, water, plants and animals!! I truly believe we are the best farmers and ranchers in the world, but we have issues that plague us as well.

Paul DuBourt, NRCS District Conservationist

## Soil Tunnels

Farmers especially have begun to realize the importance of understanding and promoting soil health. In June, the Natural Resources Conservation Service brought in a blow-up soil tunnel for people attending the Foster County Fair to walk through. It provided an opportunity to learn about soil formation, profiles, properties, and ecology. A smaller soil tunnel built by Barnes County SCD was brought in for the summer reading program at the Carrington Library on July 6th. This version, geared toward children, gave them a chance to crawl "underground" with a flashlight to explore similar concepts.



Soil tunnels at the fair (above) and at the library (below).



## First Grade Tree Planting

The Soil Conservation District held its 12th annual First Grade Tree Planting on May 19 this year. This event is part of the City of Carrington's official Arbor Day celebration. The tree planting was attended by City Auditor Heather Carr and SCD Supervisor Marie Pozarnsky. School personnel attending included Para Dawn Kollman and elementary tutoring student Billy Holtan.



Teachers Adeline Fischer and Lexi Sveum brought their students to learn about conservation, the value of trees, and how to plant them from SCD Chairman Curtiss Klein and SCD District Manager Dionn Schaaf. The Carrington Tree Board provided two trees for the Class of 2027 to plant. The students all took turns helping to plant an "Autumn Blaze" hybrid maple at the high school grounds, and a "Snowdrift" flowering crabapple tree at the city park. Ewan Aberle, Kirby Freeman, Audrey Hahne, and Madalina Ciubotoreanu got to take home the four kid-sized shovels provided by the SCD, and the students and their teachers all received conservation T-shirts.



## Conservation Education in Local Schools



### "Keep North Dakota Clean" Poster Contest Winners

We are pleased to announce this year's local Foster County winners for their grades in the Keep North Dakota Clean poster contest. The winners and themes are: Grade 1 – Keep North Dakota Clean: Alec Threadgold. Grade 3 – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Isabel Wendel. Grade 4 – Habitat, Homes for Wildlife: Kacie Rexin, Kylie Skadberg. Grade 5 – Trees Are Terrific: Allison Jarrett, Payton Hochhalter. Grade 6 – Help Prevent Runoff Pollution: Aiden Aberle. These students received a voucher for a free conservation grade tree from Foster County Soil Conservation District. The public was able to view their posters at the SCD office and at the SCD booth during the Foster County Fair in June.

Poster Contest Winners. Back L to R: Payton Hochhalter, Kacie Rexin, Allison Jarrett, Aiden Aberle. Front L to R: Isabel Wendel, Kylie Skadberg, Alec Threadgold.

Wendel. Grade 4 – Habitat, Homes for Wildlife: Kacie Rexin, Kylie Skadberg. Grade 5 – Trees Are Terrific: Allison Jarrett, Payton Hochhalter. Grade 6 – Help Prevent Runoff Pollution: Aiden Aberle. These students received a voucher for a free conservation grade tree from Foster County Soil Conservation District. The public was able to view their posters at the SCD office and at the SCD booth during the Foster County Fair in June.

### Vegetable Pots at Foster County Schools

As people get farther from the farm, it's important for children to know where food comes from and how things grow. The District provided peat pots, soil, and cherry tomato seeds for students in local schools to plant their own vegetables that they could take home at the end of the school year.



Mr. Pazdernik's Carrington 5th Grade Class with their vegetable pots.

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### Midkota Earth Day

Midkota Elementary School celebrated Earth Day on April 18th. They divided the students into teams to plant flowers, complete a nature scavenger hunt, and do cleanup in the city. The district provided conifer seedlings as prizes for the winning team members.



Midkota Elementary Earth Day Scavenger Hunt winners, L to R: Carter (grd 2), Scarlett (K), Thristian (grd 4), Hunter (grd 6), Shelby (grd 2), Brooke, (grd 1), and Bryce (grd 3).