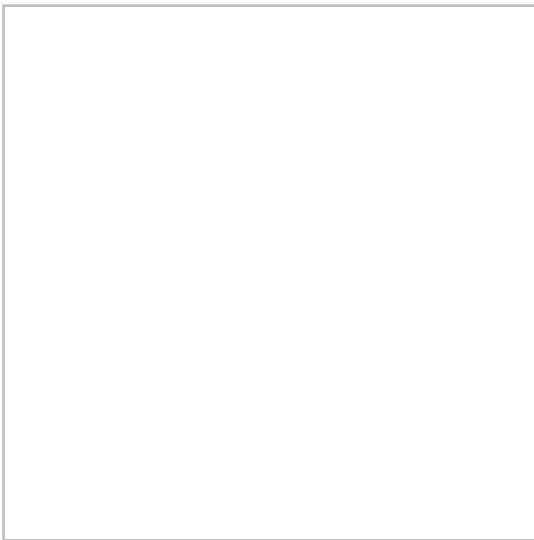


From: [Dakota County SWCD](#)
To: clerk@greenvalletwp.org
Subject: Dakota County SWCD 2025 Summer Newsletter
Date: Friday, July 11, 2025 9:28:28 AM



Irrigation Water Testing for Nitrogen Crediting

We're working with Dakota County and the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center to offer farmers who irrigate their crops the opportunity to test (at no cost) their irrigation water for nitrogen!



Participants will receive nitrate results the same day. After receiving their results, participants will learn how to credit nitrate in their irrigation water for next year's nutrient management plans. There will also be an opportunity to talk about irrigation scheduling and walk through the Irrigation Management Assistant (IMA) Tool with SWCD staff.

Those who are interested in participating can collect their samples ([sampling instructions](#)) and bring them to any of the four upcoming drop-in sessions:

- Thursday, July 10, 2–6:30 pm, Vermillion City Hall, 105 Main St. E., Vermillion
- Tuesday, July 15, 2–6:30 pm, Hampton Town Hall, 5450 260th St. E., Randolph
- Monday, Aug. 4, 2–6:30 pm, Douglas Town Hall, 12409 240th St., Hampton
- Tuesday, Aug. 19, 2–6:30 pm, Marshan Town Hall, 12497 205th St. E., Hastings

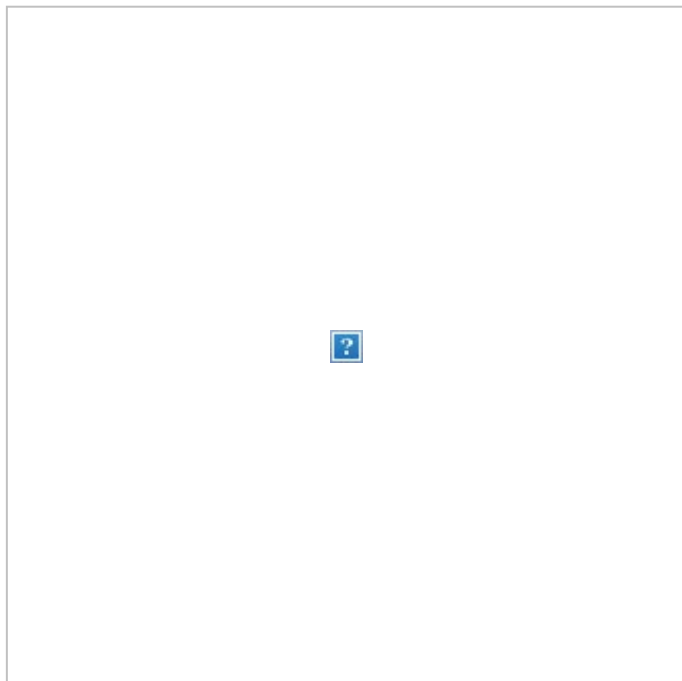
****Are you a private well owner?** You can bring a drinking water sample in for testing. Results and applicable treatment recommendations will be available to you!

For more details about this testing effort and how you can participate, go to Dakota County's [Irrigation Water Testing page](#). For questions, contact [Matthew Belanger](#) at 952-891-7132.

Interested in installing a native prairie on your own property?

The Dakota SWCD can provide technical and financial assistance for qualifying native prairie installations.

For more information, visit the SWCD [website](#) at or call 651-480-7777.



Prairie Tours at the Dakota County Fair

Join Dakota County SWCD staff on a tractor-pulled trolley tour of the “Big Slough” prairie located just south of fairgrounds! Immerse yourself in a mosaic of native wildflowers and learn more about the history of this restoration site as well as the benefits of prairie ecosystems.

Tours will be held daily from **Tuesday, August 5th through Friday, August 8th starting at 11:30 AM** (pickup located near information kiosk outside the fair office building). Trolley seating will be first come, first served with all ages welcome to attend!

Starry Trek

[Starry Trek](#) is a statewide event focused on searching for one of Minnesota's newest aquatic invasive species, starry stonewort (and other invaders). This event is an opportunity for you and others in your community to team up with hundreds of your fellow Minnesotans to better understand aquatic invasive species distribution!

Dakota County participants will meet at the [Thomas Lake Park Pavilion in Eagan](#) for a brief training and question and answer session before heading out to local lakes and rivers for monitoring. Participants are tasked with collecting samples and identifying species found at their monitoring locations. All participants will need to return to the local training site to check-in and turn in any specimens and datasheets at the end of the day. No experience necessary!

Participants under the age of 18 will need to be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Youth clubs (scouts, 4-H, etc.) can contact [Megan Weber](#), University of Minnesota Extension Aquatic Invasive Species educator, for information about club participation.

Grab your kids and call up your neighbors! Starry Trek is a great opportunity to get outside and see what lies beneath the water at your favorite lake! Contact [Lindsey Albright](#), Dakota County SWCD Monitoring & Outreach Coordinator, if you have any questions!

[Sign up for Starry Trek!](#)



Lawns Re-Imagined

A smarter way to lawn

Each year, more lawn is added to the Dakota County landscape as we add new suburban neighborhoods. But the lawns of today are very different from those installed in the 1970s.

Back then, new residential lawns were typically seeded and hand-watered on slightly compacted native soils. Today, however, most new lawns are sodded systems laid over heavily compacted soil, often stripped of topsoil. These modern lawn environments struggle to stay green without heavy irrigation—making them thirsty and high-maintenance.

For the average household, regularly watering the lawn can add \$400 or more to the summer water bill, most of which comes from our groundwater resources. In addition to taking our money and our time, the fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns often end up into stormwater ponds, and eventually into our lakes. Cities across Dakota County are investing heavily in cleaning up these water bodies—but how we “lawn” is part of the problem.

You can be part of the solution—by *lawning differently*.

Earlier this year, 190 residents signed up for our [Lawns Re-Imagined workshops](#) to learn about fine fescue lawns, a smarter alternative that requires less water, less fertilizer, and less mowing. Attendees gained practical guidance on how to convert their traditional turf into low-input fine fescue lawns.

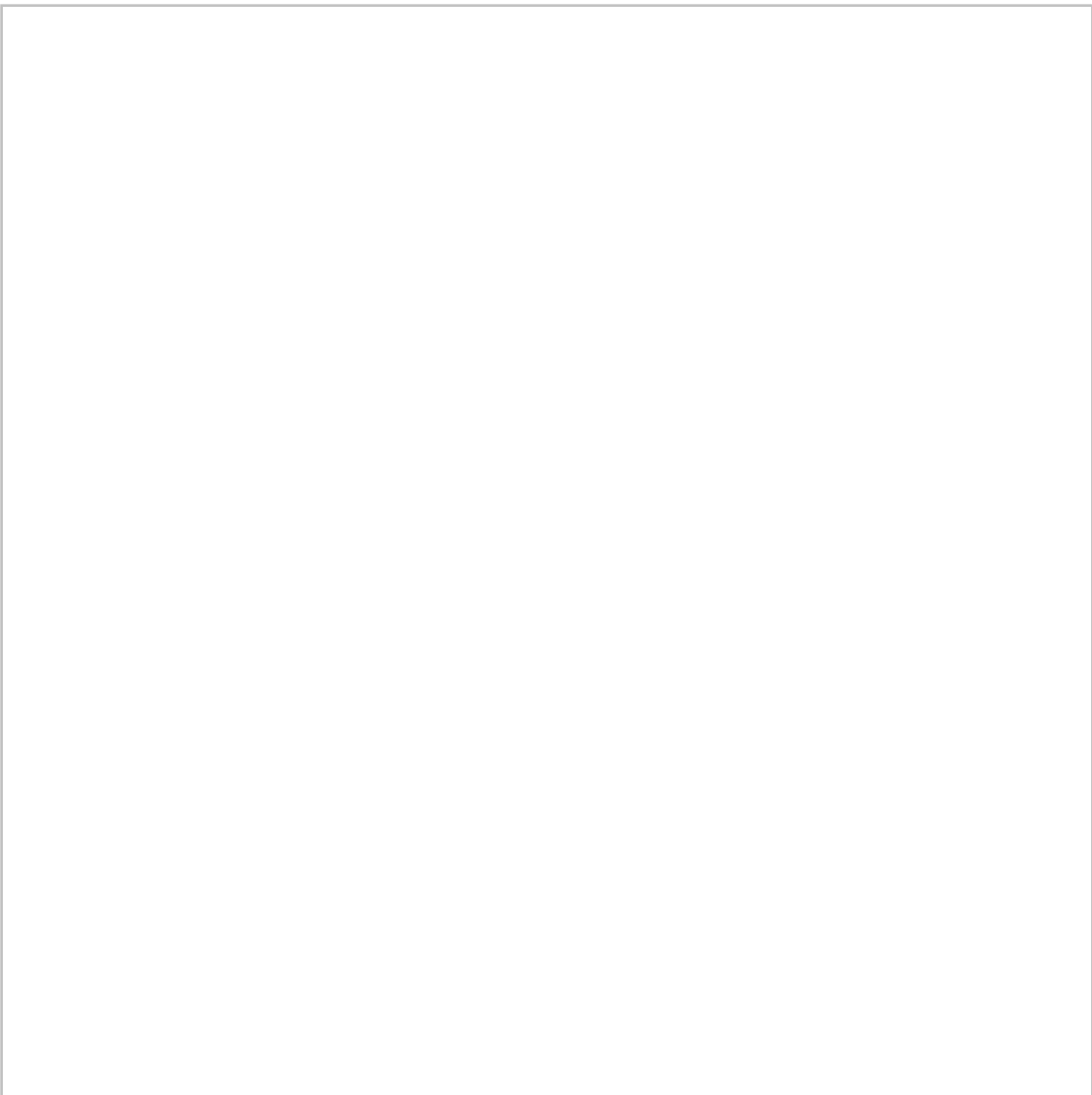
This summer, 12 households will participate in a guided lawn conversion process, joining the 12 households from last year who have already made the switch.

Contact [Victoria Ranua](#), Dakota County SWCD Watershed Coordinator, if you have any questions!



Lawn Watering Wisdom

Meet Greg—a dedicated lawn guy who learns that proper watering isn't about flooding the yard!



Learn how to conserve water, save money, and keep your grass green all season long. From adjusting sprinkler heads to installing a smart irrigation controller, see how easy it is to care for your lawn while protecting our precious groundwater.

Key Takeaways:

- Only 1 inch of water per week (including rain!) keeps lawns healthy.
- Redirect sprinkler heads to avoid watering sidewalks and driveways.
- Use a smart controller that syncs with weather reports to skip watering when it rains.
- Avoid watering during the hottest part of the day to reduce evaporation.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn for natural fertilizer.
- Take the Dakota County Water Wise Pledge to conserve water and lower your water bill.

Ready to take the next step? Join the Dakota County Water Wise Challenge and pledge to reduce water waste in your home! **Sign the [Water Wise Pledge](#)** and put your new water conservation knowledge in action!

Learn more about how you can help conserve water [here](#)!



Thank you everyone who purchased trees through our [annual tree sale](#) this year.
This year's sale was incredibly successful with almost 14,000 native trees and shrubs planted in Dakota County and surrounding areas!

We appreciate everyone who filled out the survey.
This will help us as we start putting together plans for the 2026 tree sale!

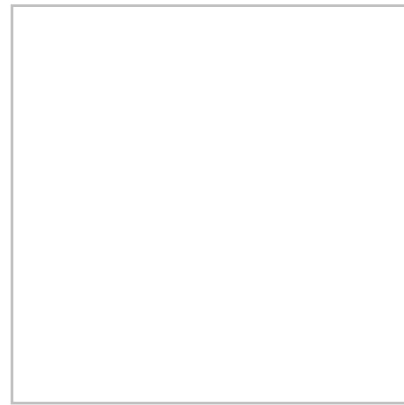
[Add your name to the 2026 Tree Sale Sign-up Here!](#)

Hastings Weather Station Relocation

The [NDAWN Hastings Weather station](#) has been upgraded and relocated about a mile south of Hastings! In addition to its new location, the station also added monitoring equipment that wasn't previously being

recorded including:

- Evapotranspiration
- Precipitation from snow and/or hail
- Temperature Inversion alerts
- Runoff risk forecasting



Real-time data can be found at [NDAWN Current Conditions](#) under the "Weather Data" tab - click "Table" to find the Hastings station. The dashboard version displaying Hasting's weather information can be found [here](#).

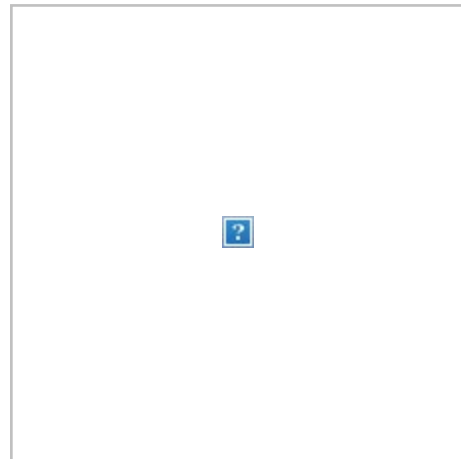
As a reminder, temperature, rainfall, wind speed and direction, pressure, dew point, humidity, and solar radiation are still available and updated every 5 minutes.

Financial Assistance for Water Treatment

Are you a private well owner concerned about contaminants in your drinking water? Dakota County has grant funding to help!

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) [drinking water guidelines](#) are:

- Arsenic: 2 µg/L (micrograms per liter)
- Manganese: 0.100 mg/L (milligrams per liter)
- Nitrate: 10 mg/L (milligrams per liter)
- Coliform Bacteria: Any detection
- Lead: Any detection



Systems such as a Reverse Osmosis (RO) or Carbon filters are eligible. The program is first come, first serve so you are encouraged to apply right away. Households that are connected to a city's water supply are *not* eligible.

For more information, visit Dakota County's Safe Drinking Water Grant [page](#).

2024 Virtual Tour

[Take a trip](#) around Dakota County to check out a sampling of projects we installed with city and local partners and landowners in 2024!

[Tour stops](#) include raingarden and native gardens installed through our Landscaping for Clean Water program and several soil health and erosion control projects!

Climate Resiliency

Have recent, heavier rainfall events impacted your operation? Are you noticing more temperature swings throughout the field season making it difficult to plan? Changing weather patterns are creating new challenges forcing growers to adapt to climatic conditions.

The good news? Farmers have proven to be adaptive and creative in coming up with solutions to new issues. Improving soil health and incorporating conservation practices can help build a farm's ability to respond to adverse situations. A few short-term strategies are listed below:

- Conserve water by switching to drip irrigation or variable rate technology to manage and interpret observations to inform management decisions.
- Build organic matter and carbon back up in the soil by incorporating the use of cover crops and reduced tillage.
- Select heat and disease tolerant varieties and create an intensive Integrated Pest Management plan.
- Diversifying crops to mitigate risk and tap into other markets.

Interested in joining a cohort to discuss more of these issues? Land Stewardship Project (LSP) and the University of Minnesota Extension are offering a program to improve your planning skills to grow climate resilience on your farm. A stipend is available for participants who provide feedback on their experience. Please reach out to LSP's Shea-Lynn Ramthun at 651-301-187 or slramthun@landstewardshipproject.org for more information.

Additional Resources can be found at:

- [About - Cultivating Resilience LLC](#) – Resilient Agriculture Book by Laura Lengnick
- [USDA's Adaptation Resources for Agriculture Guide](#)
- [Creating farm emergency action plans | UMN Extension](#)
- [Tribal Climate Adaptation Menu | Climate Change Response Framework](#)

Upcoming Events

July 23rd at 8:30am: Vermillion River Landowner Field Day

| Do you own land near the Vermillion River between Hastings and Farmington? Join us for a morning field day hosted by [Friends of the Mississippi River](#) that is focused on land protection and sustainable habitat management options in the Vermillion River Watershed. Learn about land protection options and partners, hear about practical strategies to enhance your land's health and productivity, and tour an example habitat restoration project. The field day will take place at the [South Branch Vermillion River Aquatic Management Area](#) (on the south side of 200th St. E just west of Highway 52). Please RSVP by Friday July 18th, 2025 to attend. To RSVP, please contact: Alex Roth, FMR's Land Conservation Program Director via email at aroth@fmr.org or at 651-477-0928.



July 23rd at 9:30am: Mighty Machines | Join us and other Dakota County staff at Burnhaven Library for a touch a truck event! Climb inside, touch and explore trucks, vehicles, and other machines from Dakota County's large fleet of equipment. Presented by Dakota County Fleet Management. Geared for youth ages 2 and older with parent or caregiver. Upcoming Mighty Machines events will be hosted at Wescott Library (Eagan) and Heritage Library (Lakeville) in August. [Learn more.](#)

Starting August 1st: Soil Health Equipment Grant Application | Interested in applying for cost-share for the purchase of soil health equipment? Eligible expenses include no-till drills, strip tillage equipment, cover crop seeding equipment, and more. [Learn more.](#)

Monday August 4th at 12pm: Dakota County Fair | Come to the fairgrounds and enjoy carnival rides, food and fun! Check out our booth in the Natural Resources building and enter the *native plant giveaway*! You can also take a load off and enjoy a trolley ride through the native prairie Tuesday through Friday. A demolition derby, 4H livestock shows, and live music will be going all week and continuing through the weekend! Admission to the 2025 Fair is FREE/parking \$10; tickets for grandstand shows and carnival rides are available starting July 23rd. [Learn more.](#)

Saturday, August 9th at 9am: Starry Trek | Meet up with conservation-minded Minnesotans at locations across the state for a fun-filled morning of searching for starry stonewort and other aquatic invasive species! Dakota County volunteers will meet at the Thomas Lake Park Pavilion in Eagan for a brief training and question and answer session before heading out to local lakes and rivers for monitoring. No experience necessary! [Learn more.](#)

Thursday, August 14th at 9am: Kernza Field Day | Join us for a field day showcasing the University of Minnesota's perennial grain crop, Kernza. This dual-use cool-season forage grass has been bred to maximize grain production as well as reduce nitrate leaching into groundwater. Registration link coming to the [SWCD website](#) soon!



Dakota County SWCD | 4100 W 220th Street | Farmington, MN 55024 US

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