



Aitkin County SWCD Leading the Way in Sustainable Forestry

Featured Project

The Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is breaking new ground in the arena of forest management and protection. The Aitkin County SWCD has a group certificate through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) that identifies private forestlands as sustainably managed. Through this voluntary program, landowners with a forest stewardship plan enroll their forest acreage and manage their woodlands for multiple benefits including water quality protection and maintenance of wildlife habitat.

Forests in central Minnesota are a critical resource in protecting the area's water resources through holding the soil in place and serving as a vital reservoir that reduces the peak runoff from high rain events and extends stream flow during periods of drought. Many of the region's lakes are surrounded by forestlands that may be susceptible to future development, which could lead to the impairment of these waters. By certifying their forests as sustainable, landowners can see additional financial benefit and may be encouraged to defer the development of these sensitive properties. By taking on the responsibility of insuring that this group certificate remains current, the Aitkin County SWCD is easing the burden to their local landowners who wish to see their well-managed forests certified as sustainable.



Roger Howard, Aitkin County SWCD Certified Group landowner, eyes up a basswood tree on his property. The wood from this tree will be marketed as FSC Certified.



Location: Aitkin County

Partners: Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District, Dovetail Partners, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, U.S. Forest Service, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Project Timeline: May 2007 (Aitkin County SWCD received Forest Stewardship Council Certificate) and the program is ongoing.

Project Costs / Funding Sources: Minnesota and Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (as recommended by the LCCMR), U.S. Forest Service, and USDA NRCS.

BWSR Featured Project

Keys to Success: The Aitkin County SWCD offers forest certification on a voluntary basis to private landowners who can find many reasons to participate. Through the voluntary participation of landowners, forest land is being preserved, which maintains the region's high water quality and protects the sensitive forest soils.

BWSR role: BWSR encourages the protection of forest resources around sensitive lakes and finds the certification program to be a useful tool for meeting water quality protection goals. The protection and preservation of forest resources is also documented in their BWSR-approved comprehensive local water management plan.

Measurable Outcomes: 19 landowners certifying almost 3,000 acres through FSC.

For more information:

www.aitkincountyswcd.org/FSC.html



Roger Howard, Aitkin County SWCD Certified Group landowner, pictured with Aitkin County SWCD District Forester Dennis Thompson and a stack of FSC certified lumber.



FSC picture frame made out of paper birch with the Aitkin County SWCD chain of custody (CoC) number.