

From the *Dodge Conservationist* newsletter, April 1951, Vol 3, No,4:

## **Creation of a Soil Conservation District**

Exactly what is a soil conservation district and how does it come into being? It's beginnings are a little like growing from seed a rare plant. Delicate planting and careful nurturing make it grow and thrive.

Some person saw the need for productive soil not only today but for years to come. He was concerned that too often past management led toward depletion. His concern spread to others. Soon a group of farm people was interested in how they might farm to keep up yields and leave fertile lands to their children. Appreciation of the fact that the problems were spread over entire watersheds grew. Farm fences didn't confine the soil and water conservation problem. Runoff water and silt from one farm had to travel across and through many. To drain wet areas meant a common outlet. The best and in fact only solution seemed to be trying to treat each acre of land according to its needs.

It appeared to those concerned that a community wide effort was essential. How could everyone be swayed into starting? Conservation thinkers throughout Dodge County began informing their neighbors of the need and this new way of getting together to do something about better soil management. A petition for a district to be known as the Dodge County District was signed by 25 farmers and sent to the state committee in the summer of 1946. Following this written consent to organize was given by a majority of the landowners. In August, 1947 the Secretary of State issued a certificate of organization the Dodge County District. It was legally established as a political subdivision of the State of Minnesota. Previous to that three of the twelve townships had been a part of a neighboring district since 1940.

The law stated that such a district would be run and governed by a board of five of its farmers. Accordingly, such a board was elected.

United States of America.



CERTIFICATE OF DUE ORGANIZATION OF THE  
DODGE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT.

To ALL To WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETING:

WHEREAS, HENRY OLIVE AND CLIFFORD TOQUAM, OF THE COUNTY OF DODGE, THE DULY APPOINTED SUPERVISORS OF THE DODGE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT, ACTING PURSUANT TO THE MINNESOTA SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS LAW, CHAPTER 441 OF THE LAWS OF MINNESOTA FOR 1937, APPROVED APRIL 20, 1937, HAVE FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE AN APPLICATION, SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BY EACH OF THEM BEFORE AN OFFICER AUTHORIZED BY LAW TO TAKE AND CERTIFY OATHS, SETTING FORTH:

(1) THAT A CERTIFICATE OF DUE ORGANIZATION OF THE UPPER ZUMBRO SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT AS A GOVERNMENTAL SUBDIVISION OF THIS STATE AND A PUBLIC BODY, CORPORATE AND POLITIC, WAS ISSUED BY THIS OFFICE ON THE 25TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1940;

(2) THAT A CERTIFICATE OF INCLUSION WITHIN THE SAID UPPER ZUMBRO SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF ALL OF THE COUNTY OF DODGE NOT WITHIN THE ORIGINAL DISTRICT WAS ISSUED BY THIS OFFICE ON THE 13TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1944;

(3) THAT A CERTIFICATE OF INCLUSION WITHIN THE SAID UPPER ZUMBRO SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT OF ALL OF THAT COUNTY OF OLSTED NOT WITHIN THE ORIGINAL DISTRICT WAS ISSUED BY THIS OFFICE ON THE 8TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1944;

(4) THAT A PETITION FOR THE SEPARATION OF DODGE COUNTY FROM THE UPPER ZUMBRO SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND THE CREATION OF SAME AS A SEPARATE SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT TO BE KNOWN AS THE DODGE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT WAS FILED WITH THE STATE SOIL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE STATE SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS LAW, AND THE PROCEEDINGS SPECIFIED IN SAID ACT WERE TAKEN PURSUANT TO SUCH PETITION, THAT THE SAID APPLICATION WAS FILED IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DISTRICT AS A GOVERNMENTAL SUBDIVISION AND A PUBLIC BODY, CORPORATE AND POLITIC, AND THAT THE STATE COMMITTEE HAS APPOINTED THEM AS SUPERVISORS;

(5) THE NAME AND OFFICIAL RESIDENCE OF THE DISTRICT SUPERVISORS, TOGETHER WITH A CERTIFIED COPY OF THE APPOINTMENTS EVIDENCING THEIR RIGHT TO OFFICE;

(6) THEIR TERM OF OFFICE;

(7) THE NAME WHICH IS PROPOSED FOR THE DISTRICT; AND



From the *Dodge County Independent*, 1952:

## Dodge County S C District Now In 6th Year

Official birthday of the Dodge County Soil Conservation District is June 18, 1947, but the story of organized soil conservation work in the county goes back a good deal farther than that.

It was in 1940, only three years after the Minnesota legislature passed the necessary enabling act, that a part of Dodge County was included in a soil conservation district.

Since that time the gospel of conserving soil fertility and productivity has so spread in Dodge County that the district now lists 584 farmers as district cooperators. The names of these conservation leaders are printed on the pages which follow.

Southeastern Minnesota was actually the birthplace of the Minnesota soil conservation movement. As early as 1934 demonstration projects were established at Winona, Caledonia, and Spring Valley, and two years later there was a fourth at Faribault.

In 1935, Congress created the U.S. Soil Conservation Service to encourage the wise use of our soil and water resources, and in 1937 the Minnesota legislature authorized farmers to set up soil conservation districts as a political subdivision of the State. This act was, and still is, for the public welfare, health and safety of the people of Minnesota.

In 1940 three Dodge County townships -- Milton, Mantorville, and Canisteo -- were included in the newly organized Upper Zumbro Soil Conservation District. Eight townships of Olmsted County made up the rest of the district.

The original board of supervisors included Harold Caulfield, Wright Parkin, Arthur Mohlke, Harold Searles, and George Mohlke. In 1941, Henry Olive of Kasson was appointed to take the place of Wright Parkin, who resigned, and in 1943 George Mohlke resigned to be succeeded by Leslie Trapp of Rochester.

In September of 1944, by request of the farm people, the remaining nine townships of Dodge County were added to the Upper Zumbro District. Two months later, the remaining ten townships of Olmsted County were also included and the following August, Albert Yentsch of Blooming Prairie succeeded Art Mohlke on the board of supervisors.

This same year, 1945, the soil conservation district established an office in Dodge Center to take care of the Dodge County part of the Upper Zumbro District. Nels Snustad, now in Fergus Falls, was put in charge, with Hjalmer Johnson as engineer and Mike Crowe as his assistant.

On March 11, 1947 Dodge County completed the legal procedure required to separate itself from the Upper Zumbro District and on June 18th the Secretary of State issued the certificate of organization for the Dodge County Soil Conservation District as it is today.

The State Soil Conservation Committee appointed Henry Olive and Clifford Toquam, Blooming Prairie, to the board. Farmers of the district then elected Erland McMartin, Alf Larson, and Klaus Alberts as the other three members.

In 1950 Henry Olive declined to run for re-election, and Floyd Bigelow of Claremont was chosen in his place. Erland McMartin did not seek re-election in 1951, and the voters named Clarence Horen to that position.

Another vacancy occurred last fall when Klaus Alberts became county P.M.A. chairman and resigned from the soil conservation district board. Robert Parkin was appointed at that time, and Glen Keller was elected last March.

Thus, the board now includes Clifford Toquam, chairman, Clarence Horen, vice-chairman, Alf Larson, secretary, Floyd Bigelow, treasurer, and Glen Keller, member.

Ernie Schober who came as a farm planner trainee in August, 1949, now heads the Dodge Center office as work unit conservationist. Mayron Ritchey, who has been here since 1946, is conservation aide, and Haven Lee of Vernon Township is hired by the board during rush times.

### **A little more history:**

The purpose of a District was to assist land occupiers in applying proper systems for the conservation of their soil and water resources. As time went on, these ideas expanded to include assistance to farmers in groups, agriculture water management, flood control on farms, and flood control on small watersheds.

To reflect this new water concept, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution on December 6, 1961 to change the name from **Dodge County Soil Conservation District** to ***Dodge Soil and Water Conservation District*** ( **SWCD** ). On February 21, 1962 the Secretary of State filed the new name. In 1969, the Minnesota state legislature passed a blanket policy adding **“and Water “** to all Soil Conservation Districts.