

Since 1952, Winona County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) has recognized those who demonstrate outstanding care of our valuable soil and water resources.

**For 2025, Winona County SWCD is honored to recognize
Claire Bender and Sue Ramthun as our Outstanding Conservationists.**

- Claire and Sue began their journey in 2003 when they purchased their property which was primarily forested land with a cabin and stream. They have since expanded their land to include forest and agricultural areas.
- With the help from a friend and guidance from the DNR, they identified resource concerns on their land which led them to managing invasive species, establishing native prairie and over 225 trees and shrubs.
- Claire and Sue's conservation journey has also included:
 - A stream improvement project
 - Waterway construction to reduce erosion
 - 2 grade stabilization structures to stabilize gullies
- In 2024, Claire and Sue hosted a Trout Stream Field Day on their property allowing attendees an up-close look at the impact of their conservation efforts in action.
- Claire and Sue shared with SWCD staff:
"We are grateful for the opportunity to preserve, protect and improve this property. We are grateful for the trusted relationships we have made with Winona County SWCD, DNR, Hiawatha MN Trout Unlimited and our neighbors."

Claire and Sue, thank you for your hard work of implementing conservation practices and your dedication to being good stewards of the land in Winona County!

**Please join me in congratulating the
2025 Winona County SWCD Outstanding Conservationists
Claire Bender and Sue Ramthun**