

A special supplement to The Renville County Shopper & The Glencoe Advertiser

2017  
AG

## New UFC Facility

p.3

## Renville Co. Farmer Takes in Nat'l Biodiesel Conf. p.6

## Replay - From Soybeans p.9

## Water Buffer Strips p.11

## Minnesota Business Leaders Talk Water Quality Action p.21

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Index

4 Square Builders .....	39	Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance Co. -		Lindeman Seeds .....	4	Renville County Register .....	23
ADM Seedwest.....	14	Keith L. Scott Agency .....	6	Linder Farm Network .....	36	Renville Sales, Inc. ....	42
Ag Specialists .....	8	Farmers Union Insurance .....	29	Mallak Trucking Inc. ....	7	Revier Cattle Co. ....	12
AgStar - Chad Young .....	49	Finish Line Seed Inc. ....	21	Marcus Well Drilling .....	7	Rickert Excavating .....	27
AgStar Financial Services .....	4	First Minnesota Bank, Glencoe .....	32	McLeod Publishing, Inc.....	27,33,35	Ridgewater College .....	24
Ag Quest Financial Service Inc.....	14	First Security Bank .....	12	McLeod Publishing, Inc .....	41,45,47	Rockhard Concrete & Masonry .....	8
Alsleben Livestock Trucking .....	9	Flatworks Concrete Const., LLC .....	2	Mid-County Co-op .....	43	Sam's Tire Service .....	34
Arnold's Implement Inc.....	27	Fleet Supply True Value .....	43	MidCountry Bank .....	28	Saunders Mertens Schmitz, P.A. ....	20
Auto Value Parts Stores .....	20	Flora Mutual Insurance Co. ....	7	Midwest Machinery Co. ....	10	Schauer's Custom Log Sawing.....	4
Bird Island-Hawk Creek		Foamtastic Insulation, Inc. ....	24	Mid-State Painting .....	38	Schauer's Sheep .....	11
FarMutual Ins. Agency .....	6	Form A Feed .....	51	Minnesota Corn & Soybean Growers....	39	Security Bank & Trust Co. ....	17
Bergmann Interiors .....	18	Frandsen Bank & Trust.....	38	MinnWest Bank .....	16	Seneca Foods Corp. ....	46
Bird Island Soil Service .....	20	Gavin, Winters, & Long, Ltd.....	18	Morken Eckberg Steiner, LLC .....	43	Sibley Surveyors, Inc.....	8
Borka Excavating .....	8	Glencoe Co-op Assn .....	48	Morris Builders.....	30	State Farm Insurance .....	17
Buckentin Seeds .....	31	Grizzly Buildings, Inc. ....	12	Morton Buildings .....	25	Steve's Heating & AC.....	37
Carly's Shoes .....	11	H & L Motors .....	26	Mustang Seeds .....	17	Sullivan's Electric .....	26
Citizens Alliance Bank .....	19	Hearing Care Specialists .....	49	Mycogen Seeds.....	16	Terry's Body Shop .....	19
Conklin Service, Ken Franke .....	34	Heldt Painting & Contracting, LLC .....	27	Nelson's Salvage & Towing, Inc. ....	7	Thalmann Seeds .....	18
Co-op Country Farmers Elevator .....	16	Heller Group Realty .....	14	Northern Plumbing & Heating, Inc. ....	16	Thurston Genetics.....	20
Country Wide Lumber .....	26	Henslin Auctions, Inc. ....	52	Olivia Machine Shop Inc.....	19	Tjosvold Equipment, Inc. ....	37
The Country Store .....	15	HomeTown Bank .....	40	Olivia Pet Clinic .....	20	Two-Way Communications .....	4
Creative Details .....	40	Huseby Insurance Agency .....	19	On Trax Truck Repair .....	18	United Farmers Coop.....	24
Dahlberg Boot & Trailer Sales .....	19	Hutchinson Co-op.....	46	Otto Farms Operations Inc. ....	34	Upper Midwest Management .....	16
Dale's Auto Sales .....	46	Hutchinson Farm Toy &		Pine Country Bank .....	7	Valley Electric of Olivia Inc. ....	38
Dairyland Seed - Hoffman .....	26	Collectible Show .....	8	Pinnacle .....	12	Vos Construction .....	3
Dawson Co-op Credit Union .....	14	Jackels & Ross Concrete Inc. ....	13	Precision Planting - Chad Schmalz .....	41	Waconia Dodge .....	49
Duane Jindra Crop Ins. Agency .....	18	JD's Custom Baling .....	8	Pro Auto .....	3	Willmar Aerial Spraying, Inc. ....	40
Edward Jones-Kirk Miller .....	9	Jerry Scharpe Ltd.....	27	Pro Equipment Sales .....	19	Weis Oil Co. ....	37
E.G. Rud & Sons, Inc. ....	51	John Decker Agency .....	8	Professional Insurance Providers .....	15	Young America Mutual Ins. Co.....	8
Enestvedt Seed Co.....	38	J&R Electric, Inc .....	12	RC Hospital & Clinics .....	40	Zielsdorf Auction Team .....	22
Ervin Well Company .....	21	K & S Electric .....	26	Remington Seeds, LLC .....	26		
Exsted Realty .....	15	K & S Millwrights, Inc. ....	44				
F & M Bank Minnesota .....	50	Kahnke Brothers Tree Farm .....	51				
F & M Insurance.....	50	Ken's Excavating .....	8				
F & M State Bank.....	23	Klein Bank .....	8				
Fahey, Inc. ....	46	Kraft Walser Law Office.....	37				
Farm Bureau Fransen/Gruhlke .....	22	Larkin Tree Care & Lndsg Inc. ....	20				
Farmers Co-op Oil Co .....	12	Liberty Tax Service .....	11				

NEWS INDEX

New UFC facility .....	p. 3 & 5
Renville County farmer takes in national biodiesel conference. ....	p. 6 & 7
Soybeans: Not just food .....	p. 9
Start to a strong farm bill .....	p. 10
Water buffer strips .....	p. 11 & 13
Rural America: A fading reality .....	p. 15
EPA & Federal Agencies: Above the rest?.....	p.17
Zenk finds success growing navy beans .....	p. 19 & 20
State, business leaders talk water quality action.....	p. 21 & 22
Schjenken looks back on 37 years with beet coop .....	p. 23-26
Ketelsen entertains corn & soybean growers.....	p. 33
Agriculture: Extraordinary efforts to improve .....	p. 35
Minnesota property tax: Disappointing .....	p. 41
God Made A Farmer.....	p. 47
Peterson, Davis, Noem & Loeb sack lead call for Strong RFS .....	p. 48

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This is an aerial view of the new United Farmers Cooperative (UFC) fertilizer facility, set to open this spring near Brownton. The photograph was taken from the top of UFC's neighboring grain-handling facility.

## New UFC Facility: Meeting The Changing Needs Of Agriculture

By Lori Copler  
McLeod County Chronicle

Crop production in the Midwest has changed dramatically in a quarter-century.

Four-row corn planters have given way to planters of up to 24 rows. The planting season used to last 30 days, now that has been compressed to about a week. Better fertilizer, seed and growing practices have dramatically boosted average crop yields. Now, farmers bring their crops to grain elevators by the semi load, rather than the past practice of tractor-pulled gravity boxes.

And those dramatic changes have re-

sulted in a dramatic change in the landscape just northwest of Brownton along Highway 15 — the construction of a huge grain-handling “hub” which opened in 2012 and, now, a large fertilizer facility that will open in time for this spring’s planting season.

And while United Farmers Cooperative (UFC), which built the facilities, took all of the changes into account while planning the facility, the driving factor on its location was how to move large quantities of product in an efficient and timely manner. In the spring, that means getting fertilizer in and, in the fall, it means moving

crops out to market.

Jeff Nielsen, UFC’s general manager, said that planning for the Brownton facilities actually started nearly a decade ago as UFC looked at ways to meet the changing agricultural landscape. Marketing and feasibility studies helped determine the site, and the site chosen was based primarily on access to north and south highway arteries and the availability of a Class 1 railroad.

The north-south truck artery is provided by Minnesota Highway 15, which intersects with U.S. Highway 212, an east-west corridor. And Twin Cities & Western

(TC&W) Railroad has a Class 1 short-line rail that runs east-west just north of the intersection of Highways 15 and 212.

Nielsen said that switching agreements with TC&W and other railroads, such as BNSF, Union Pacific and Canadian Pacific, allow UFC to transport grain to the southwest, Canada, to the west coast for shipment to Asia, and southeast to Chicago and the Carolinas.

“With the fertilizer facility, it’s the same thing,” said Nielsen.

Potash is transported from Canada and

**UFC**

Turn to page 5

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## UFC

Continued to page 3

Russia, phosphates come through Florida, and nitrogen, which used to be manufactured outside the U.S., is now transported from domestic facilities.

Nielsen said that one question that always comes up is why UFC built such a huge fertilizer facility. It has the capacity to hold 53,000 tons of product. The Winthrop plant holds 38,500 tons. The former Brownton Coop Ag Center, with which UFC merged in 2016, had a capacity of 1,700 tons, which is similar to other, smaller plants UFC owns in other communities.

It also is very efficient, being able to load a semi in about six minutes, as compared to 30 to 45 minutes at UFC's other sites, not to mention fertilizer blending can be done in about a third of time needed at other sites.

But UFC didn't build the facility just for its own purposes. It also allows a couple of its partners to rent storage space for their products, so that they also can take advantage of the nearby railroad and highways.

"It's kind of like owning an apartment building," said Nielsen. "You only need one apartment for yourself, so you rent out the rest."

CHS, a regional cooperative that is owned by farmer-owned cooperatives such as UFC, uses the facility to store nitrogen. The advantage to that, said Nielsen, is that CHS can bring nitrogen to the plant all year round, than to try to rush the product in when farmers need it for application.

Similarly, Mosaic stores potash at the facility. Formerly, Mosaic was storing its product in railroad cars, and transporting it as needed.

Nielsen said the cooperation between UFC and its partners is win-win for all — the partners have a strategic location to store their product, from which they can transport it to their other member cooperatives and customers, and UFC has readily available product to mix for fertilizer, so that it doesn't have to keep its own inventory on hand.

"This way, it (product) can be handled one time, which reduces costs, makes us



UFC's new fertilizer plant near Brownton will have an automated system for mixing and loading. Pictured above is the control room in the fertilizer plant.



Pictured is the interior of the fertilizer storage area of UFC's new facility northwest of Brownton along Highway 15. The facility has a capacity of 52,000 tons. UFC rents part of the storage area to partners CHS and Mosaic.

more efficient, produces a better product and is better for the environment," said Nielsen.

And while it seems big now, the fertiliz-

er facility is built for possible expansion. The storage facility can be added onto on its south side, and the footings for the mixing tower were built sturdy enough to

hold a higher-capacity tower in the future.

Nielsen and Jay Waltermann, vice president of special projects, also talked about the benefits of merging with the Brownton Co-op Ag Center, which owned a fertilizer facility just south of UFC's grain facility. The Ag Center also owned a grain elevator in the city of Brownton.

"It went from being a somewhat contentious relationship to being a great partnership," said Nielsen of the merger. "We met and decided that we could be stronger together." Nielsen added that the merger saved millions of dollars because UFC could repurpose Brownton's existing facility, which is now the office headquarters for the Brownton site.

"It's become the hub for the entire site," said Nielsen, who added that Brownton had recently constructed a very nice maintenance shed for equipment.

Waltermann said that along with a building and equipment, the merger brought some highly experienced personnel.

"We found a skilled group of management leaders here, as well as some great people with experience in fertilizer application," said Waltermann. "It was a tremendous fit, we've done a number of mergers, but none have gone as smoothly as this one."

Roger Trebbensee, former assistant manager for the Brownton Coop Ag Center, will be the supervisor at the UFC's Brownton site.

Nielsen said the facility will be open in time for the spring planting season, having already brought in product. Liquid fertilizer already is being mixed.

And he expects spring to be busy for the new facility.

"As you know, the fall was very wet, so there wasn't very much fertilizer applied after harvest," said Nielsen. "So we're expecting a very high volume spring."

UFC also knows that the general public has a lot of interest in the new facility, and has set an open house for April 5 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

UFC, headquartered in Winthrop, has over 300 employees and facilities in 11 communities. It offers services in energy, agronomy, natural gas, equipment, feed, grain and farm supplies.

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# Renville Co. farmer takes in Nat'l Biodiesel Conf.



Submitted photo

Joe Serbus of Bird Island.

## Finds attitudes toward biodiesel to be changing for the positive

By Ashley Alsum  
Staff Writer

Held annually, the National Biodiesel Conference brings together industry experts and decision makers from around the nation and even the world. The 2017 gathering was held Jan. 16 through 19 in San Diego, Calif. Joe Serbus of Bird Island was a representative of the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council who attended the event.

Serbus also attended the event six years ago. Since then, he said the attitude towards biodiesel has changed for the better. "Back then attention was focused on promotion, to get biodiesel recognized and accepted. Now it is well accepted and people want to know how they can get it and use it," Serbus explained.

The majority of biodiesel is distilled in the midwest and shipped everywhere for use. The two largest markets are in California with their low carbon demand and on the East Coast where the fuel is used to heat homes.

Minnesota produces more than 60 million gallons of biodiesel a year, much of that made from soybean oil. Only the oil portion of the soybean is used to process biodiesel, leaving all of the protein available for livestock and people. Each year, biodiesel adds approximately \$237 million to the state's agriculture economy.

According to the American Lung Association of Minnesota, the current use of five percent and 10 percent biodiesel blends results in greenhouse gas emissions reductions equal to removing 128,000 pas-

senger vehicles from the state's roads each year.

"In Minnesota, the results are clear. Biodiesel has delivered economic and environmental benefits throughout the state," said Serbus.

The biodiesel conference was host to a variety of sessions, many focusing on the display of new biodiesel vehicles. Other topics included understanding low carbon markets, regulation, new standards and the future of biodiesel.

Minnesota was the first in the nation to require 10 percent biodiesel, or B10, in diesel blends sold during the summer months. B10 is required from April 1 to Sept. 30 and B5 is required during the remaining winter months.

**Serbus**

Turn to page 7

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# Serbus: Biodiesel contributes \$237 million per year to Minnesota ag economy Continued from page 6

Minnesota will set B20, or 20 percent biodiesel, as the fuel standard beginning in the summer of 2018.

Serbus had a great conversation with an attendee from Vancouver concerning winter biodiesel use. People there had concerns with performance in cold weather. Serbus reassured him biodiesel worked great in Minnesota year round and should in Vancouver as well.

With a new political landscape, not much is known about how it will affect biodiesel yet. In the past, the administration has been supportive of the low carbon effort.

"A new year and a new administration can always present uncertainty in our industry," said Serbus. "But our success as an industry in Minnesota can be attributed to smart growth, and we believe there's an opportunity for continued growth on a national level."

Serbus pointed out it is crucial at this time to continue to get the word out about biodiesel. It is important to educate new officials and remind returning office holders of the impact the field has on the economy. The continued support of the rail transportation system to move the product will play a large role in this as well as helping to move agricultural products. Serbus also said there is a desire to open more refineries in the midwest. He hopes the process can be expedited. Currently it is a minimum two-year process just to get approval for the building of a



Submitted photo

Serbus is pictured amidst the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council (MSR&PC), the elected board of soybean producers from Minnesota who direct investments of the state's checkoff dollars in programs designed to increase profitability to Minnesota soybean farmers.

plant or expansion.

Serbus has seen nearly every aspect of the ag process. He raises corn, soybeans and sweet corn on 550 acres in the Bird Island/Franklin area. Serbus has also done crop adjuster work and currently

works with buffers for the Farm Service Agency.

"I've seen the impact to farmers from all angles," Serbus said.

He encourages all people involved in ag, not just farmers, to share their stories

and opinions with the community, neighbors and legislators. Making the story of ag heard is the first step towards change and action.

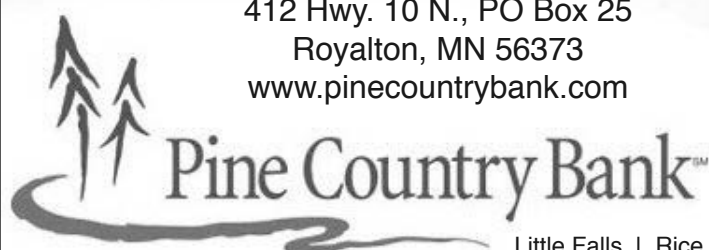
"It is on all of us to take part and be responsible," said Serbus.

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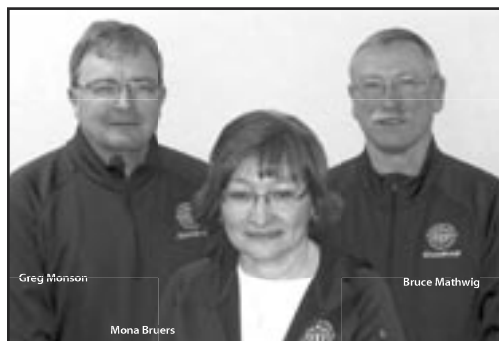
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# Soybeans: Not Just For Food

By Lori Copler  
McLeod County Chronicle

**M**ost people don't think of soybeans as having uses outside of food production.

But the next time you're driving in Hutchinson, think about this: you may well be driving on a sealant derived in good part from soybeans.

At their January annual banquet, members of the McLeod County Corn & Soybean Growers Association learned how a soy-based product, RePLAY, may be extending the lives of roads in the city of Hutchinson.

John Olson, the city of Hutchinson's public works director, told those present about how RePLAY is preserving pavement.

Although Olson has roots in agriculture — he grew up on a farm west of Spicer — he admits to being leery when RePLAY was proposed to him as a product.

"Quite frankly, in my business, I've heard a lot of snake oil pitches," said Olson. "I have to admit I was kind of skeptical."

Olson said the city worked with McLeod County to obtain an Operational Research Assistance grant to try out the product, which first came on the market in about 2010. The city and county decided to test the product on a 15-year-old trail near the county fairgrounds, a driveway and near Menard's in Hutchinson.

According to an informational sheet from Bio-Pave Products, LLC, which makes RePLAY, the sealant is made 40

percent from soybean oil and is 88 percent bio-based overall. It reverses oxidation in asphalt by adding polymers. There is no petroleum in the sealant.

Olson said the product is easily applied,

lot of research into its effectiveness, he said he had some "anecdotal evidence" from his maintenance crew who had to drill through asphalt treated with RePLAY: "It took forever to jackhammer



using a pickup-mounted tank with a spray bar. Hand sprayers are used to reach hard to reach places.

Once it is applied, "it looks wet for about two weeks," said Olson. But it can be driven upon within a half-hour of its application, Olson added.

Olson said that while there has been a

through that."

Olson said that use of RePLAY has increased the span of time between required treatments. Using RePLAY has pushed a chip seal treatment from one to three years out to six to eight years. Now, Olson said, the city wants to experiment with a second application of RePLAY to see if it

can delay a chip seal application even longer.

Olson said a RePLAY success story can be found in the area of McLeod Avenue and Sixth Avenue in Hutchinson. The roadway was rebuilt in 2009, and had crack filling and an application of RePLAY in 2012.

He joked that there are two types of pavement "cracked, and will crack."

But an assessment of the McLeod Avenue/Sixth Avenue area in 2014 showed no new cracks, and that the existing cracks had stopped spreading.

Along with preserving asphalt for a longer period of time, Olson said RePLAY has three other benefits: it's cost effective, it can be applied over striping and paint, and it does not hurt vegetation.

Currently, the cost is about \$1.50 per square yard to apply.

Unlike oil-based sealants, RePLAY dries clear, so pavement does not have to be repainted or striped again.

"It will not be the only answer forever and ever," said Olson, "but it does extend the time for treatments to be done. It about doubles the time before we need to do a chip and seal."

RePLAY also is developing a treatment product for concrete, Olson said, and he looks forward to experimenting with the product as well.

Because of Olson's and the city of Hutchinson's willingness to try RePLAY, the association presented them with the "Friend of Agriculture Award" at the banquet.



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# An early start on a strong farm bill

By U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar  
D-Minnesota

A sugar beet grower told us about how crop insurance is working for his farm in the Red River Valley. A school board member in Canby is concerned about meeting the food needs of local families. An ethanol producer shared his plans to expand his operation and hire more workers. And a Morristown turkey grower knows all too well the risks that come in her line of work thanks to outbreaks like the 2015 avian flu.

My staff and I heard these stories and more during our Farm Bill and rural economy tours. We joined with agriculture leaders from around the state and hosted Minnesotans at forums and meetings in 16 counties to hear their priorities for the next Farm Bill, as well as ideas for our rural economy.

Despite recent challenges like the avian flu outbreak, intense flooding, and low commodity prices, Minnesota's 75,000 farms have continued to produce and help feed the world. In order for them to continue meeting those challenges head on, lawmakers need to provide the certainty and stability they need for effective long-term planning. That starts with a strong Farm Bill, which is why I'm kicking off 2017 with a focus on its 2018 reauthorization.

As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I know there's plenty to be proud of in the current Farm Bill.

One provision I worked to pass helps clear the way for more young people who want a career in agriculture. By reducing the cost of insurance and eliminating administrative fees for producers in their first five years, we've reduced barriers to starting a farm and expanded access to crop insurance for young farmers. And cultivating the next generation of farmers is important to the future of our rural economy — the average Minnesota farmer is 55 years old.

But we know there's room for improvement, too. During our tours, farmers and trade groups underscored the importance of maintaining a strong crop insurance program. They also stressed the need to adjust our dairy and commodity support programs, ensuring they better reflect market realities and are more consistent county to county.

Looking ahead, I want to keep an emphasis on improving our rural development programs, including grants for businesses and housing and water and especially broadband infrastructure.

Expanding access to high-speed internet is one of the best investments we can make. With just a percentage point increase in new broadband distribution, employment expands by 300,000 jobs. Still, more than 50 percent of households in Minnesota townships lack broadband access.

In Marshall, we heard stories about Minnesotans being left to cope without a high-speed connection. Take Nathan Green, who recalled his hopes of moving with his wife Laura and daughter to their family farm. That dream ended when they realized there was no broadband access at

the farm. Laura telecommutes for work, and their daughter's education will depend on a high-speed connection — without broadband, the move was a nonstarter.

That's unacceptable. We can do right by our rural communities by seizing the opportunity to expand broadband access through the Farm Bill's Rural Development Title.

And let's help ensure that we remain the top turkey producer in the country and that natural disasters or outbreaks like the

avian flu don't spell the end for a family farm by strengthening the safety net and mandatory livestock disaster funding.

Minnesota's agriculture community makes the most of their seasonal opportunities. Nationally, we rank near the top in wheat, corn and soybean production each year. That strong output is part of a major economic force: Minnesota's agriculture industry is the fifth largest in the country and supports nearly 350,000 jobs across the state.

As I was reminded time and time again across our state, federal agriculture policies matter not just to farmers but to everyone in rural Minnesota. I am committed to working with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for an even stronger Farm Bill.

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Buffer strip near Mankato, MN.

## Water Buffer Strips: The Controversy

By Rich Glennie  
Correspondent

**M**innesota's buffer law was signed into legislation in June 2015, then the manure hit the fan.

As a result of blow back from farmers and others in agriculture, the bill, aimed at filtering out phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment from farm runoff into the state's rivers and streams, was revisited in the 2016 legislative session and some of the bill's language was clarified.

The original bill signed by Gov. Mark Dayton mandated a 50-foot buffer along all of the state's waterways, including public and private ditches.

When revisited in 2016, that was amended

to a 50-foot average buffer with a minimum 30-foot buffer on lands adjacent to public waters, and those areas would be identified on a buffer map established by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

What hasn't changed is the start of the new law. Beginning Nov. 1, 2017, buffers must be seeded along all public waters. On public drainage systems, the deadline is Nov. 1, 2018. That regulation requires a 16.5-foot minimum width buffer on lands adjacent to public ditches as identified on the buffer maps.

The penalty for noncompliance is \$500 day, according to Ryan Freitag, director of the Soil and Water programs in the county. But the penalty is not enforceable until 11 months have passed. Freitag also is the interim county

director of the Wetland Conservation Act Government Unit, a position held by Roger Berggren, who recently retired.

Two big questions: Who enforces the new regulations and how are farmers to be compensated? Both are still in limbo.

That needs to be decided by March 31, according to Larry Phillips, a director with the Buffalo Creek Watershed District (BCWD). "Will the county or watershed be the buffer cops?"

If the county and watershed district do not want the responsibility, then the state, through its Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), may take over. "I don't know if we want the state to decide," Phillips added.

\*\*\*\*\*

Now that the 2017 Minnesota Legislature is in the hands of Republicans, the buffer legislation may be revisited again because "it needs modifications and changes," according to state Rep. Glenn Gruenhagen, R-Glencoe.

While Gruenhagen said there is a bill introduced to repeal the buffer legislation entirely, he has not signed on, yet, "because the governor will not sign it."

Instead, Gruenhagen said he would favor amending the bill to give more local control to county commissioners and local soil and water conservation boards.

The original author of the buffer legislation,

### Buffer Strips

Turn to page 13

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## Buffer Strips

Continued from page 11

Rep. Paul Torkelson, R-Hanska, indicated the goal was to have the state BWSR act as “a guidance authority;” others around the state did not see it that way.

Gruenhagen said the modifications need to consider many other items, like buffers where land slopes from a ditch, what is a private vs. public ditch, what is the pay for the buffers and who enforces the regulations. And what is the penalty for non-compliance? he said.



**Glenn Gruenhagen**

“A lot of Republicans support the repeal of the (buffer) bill,” Gruenhagen said. The House author is Rep. Steve Green, R-Fosston, and there are 12 co-authors, all Republicans.

The bill needs to more clearly define the authority of the county boards and soil and conservation boards “to determine if the buffers are necessary. Leave it up to local people to decide,” he added.

Gruenhagen also had a problem with the DNR’s mapping out the buffer areas because of the hundreds of errors in the mapping process. He said the original DNR buffer map had everything as a public ditch.

Another clarification is to provide compensation to farmers for removing private property from production. It has been estimated that 700,000 acres would have been taken out of production under Dayton’s original 50-foot mandate in 2015.

Phillips agreed. “How do you take (16.5 feet of) land and not compensate for it?” He added there is no stipulation in the legislation to compensate an agency if a farmer says: “I’m not going to do it. Take me to court!”

That could cost some agency like BCWD about \$10,000 to \$20,000 in court costs, Phillips said, “and no way to get those dollars back. The rules are pretty foggy, yet.”

Phillips said the buffer bill “was rolled out” in the last two days of the (2015) session and was passed and signed on the last day.

Freitag said the idea of the buffers was



**Another example of a buffer strip**

brought up by the governor at the 2014 Pheasant Fest. Then at the 2015 legislative session it was fast-tracked. “I was kind of surprised” on how fast the legislation was passed and signed into law, Freitag added.

While “an awful lot of people are comfortable with the law,” Phillips said, “it does not solve all problems.” There was no compensation factor.

He said he has heard all kinds of reactions from local farmers.

“Farmers are not super against it,”

Phillips added, but some ditches need

a 40-foot easement and some are private ditches with no buffers. “We need to push carefully,” with farmers, he said.

The amendments to the buffer bill in 2016 “helped, but pay is the big issue. They should be compensated for it,” Phillips said. Losing property throughout the state “all adds up.”

County Commissioner Doug Krueger said he knows of several local landowners “who are really impacted. The major hurdle will be taking somebody’s property without compensation.”

While Krueger said “there is a lot of good in this (bill),” he did not like the governor’s original mandate.

Phillips agreed and added many landowners do not feel it’s a bad deal, “but the bill was not well put together.”

As to the 2017 session Phillips said he would not be surprised to see “some massaging to make it more palatable.”

Freitag said there was a bill to award counties \$100,000 a year to enforce the buffer regulations, but that was lost when Gov. Dayton vetoed it in 2016. It was expected counties would receive \$100,000 annually under that



**Ryan Freitag**

bill.

The county will decide in a month or month and a half, “if the money is enough, Freitag said. “The state wants the locals to handle it. If not, the state will enforce it.”

Freitag also was surprised at the reaction of area farmers. “Reactions are all across the board. I expected a lot of frustration. At least they are not killing the messenger. Most understand the need.”

It takes time to write new policies, Freitag added.

Krueger agreed. He said it takes about four years to properly implement a law like the 16.5-foot buffer. The state expected to get it done in two years. “It’s all right for the government to be assertive, but the fastest it can be done is four years.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Roger Schultz, a supervisor with the McLeod County Soil and Water Conservation

Board, said he is “totally in favor” of the new buffer regulations, even though most farmers may not agree.

The regulations should be the same as the buffers around lakes — 50 feet, he said, because any waters that end up in public waters

“should be included.”

Schultz said he lived along Buffalo Creek when he farmed, and the creek took some sharp drops along the way. He said he always maintained grass buffers. That told him how far the nutrients went off the fields and into the buffers “because the grass grew taller there. I found out that 30 feet of grass filters them (nutrients) out.”

Schultz said local control is important because what happens here and conditions in northern Minnesota or elsewhere are different. “There should be minimum standards,” he

said of the 2016 amendments, “but 16-1/2 feet (along ditches) is not enough.”

While the buffers are meant to filter out pollutants like nitrogen and phosphorus, the legislation does not address open intakes into waterways, Schultz said.

“The buffer is just the first step. The next step is to eliminate tile lines from directly going into ditches and streams,” Schultz said. “The tile lines need to go through the buffer strips.”

Krueger said the drain tile work has already begun in McLeod

County. “Farmers are going along with it. They don’t want to operate intakes anymore. Farmers know they have to address runoff. They don’t want their farm land to run off.”

But he said Gov. Dayton had a “knee-jerk” reaction with his 2015 buffer bill. “The Governor does that a lot.”

“But to be honest, it’s needed,” Krueger said of buffer strips. “I’ve been on both sides of the fence. I don’t see hard fights, but there will be some.”

Schultz said farmers argue that when they bought their land, they own the land. “It’s not! When a farmer purchases land, it’s for the right to use it. Land belongs to the whole world.”

McLeod County is the northern-most county in the regional Soil and Water Conservation District, which includes southern Minnesota.

“Something has to be done,” Schultz said of the filtering buffers. He said farmers are changing, especially when fertilizer costs continue to rise. They are applying fertilizer in a more efficient way by applying it when a crop like corn “actually can use it,” and not in the fall when some of the fertilizer can run off or leach away.

“Ninety percent of farmers are good stewards of the land,” Schultz said.

He has been a McLeod County SWCD supervisor for about 20 years. One benefit of the new legislation is that county commissioners are now meeting with SWCD supervisors. “All these years, they never came to our meetings,” he added. “It’s nice to see.”

He said the establishment of ditch committees is important. “County ditches have been so neglected over the years.”

Krueger said the county ditch committees are designed to help empower and educate farmers in their district so they can help the commissioners in finding solutions.



**Doug Krueger**



**Roger Schultz**

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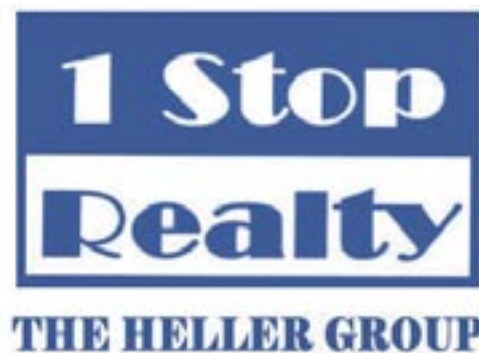


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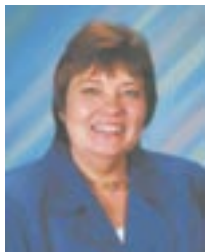
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# Rural America: A Fading Reality

Two stories crossed my desk today that both have me a bit concerned. First, the population of rural American is down to 17%, the lowest in history. The fact is, young people are moving to larger cities and not staying in rural areas.

There are a myriad of reasons to point to, more jobs, the cost of gas and energy and the lifestyle. But through this, we have been our leaders talking about the positives of rural America. I don't believe I have ever heard the president speak up for farmers or rural American opportunities. And if you listened to me in the past, I have said this about leaders from both political parties. We don't have the support from the top.

Then recently, the Chair of the Senate Ag committee said in a speech that the real bright

spot for agriculture is organic farming and specialty. Personally, I support both 100%, but isn't production agriculture a major bright spot too? Certainly the chairwoman needs to understand that.



Lynn Ketelsen

Both of these make my point. While American farmers literally feed our country and millions around the world, when do any leaders ever say only thing positive about what farmers do? It's no wonder there isn't a lot of incentive to stay in rural America.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating, American Agriculture is one of the few bright spots in a dismal economy. Thanks to the

American farmer for being innovative, productive and getting the job done. It's time some of our leaders begin to say that as well.

Lynn Ketelsen is the Farm Director for Linder Farm Network.



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# EPA & Federal Agencies: Above The Rest?

A federal court ruled this week that the EPA violated the Freedom of Information act when they made public not only the names of thousands of farmers, but confidential information about their farming operations. It was information that was no one's business, except the individual farmers. The EPA said they simply followed the law, others said it was an information dump to give information to environmental groups the EPA is in bed with.

Anyone with any common sense knew at the time this was an out of control EPA, and the ruling of the court confirms it.

So now what happens? If a farmer does something the EPA doesn't like, even in cases where they are following state law, the EPA fines them hundreds of thousands and in some

cases millions of dollars. But if the reverse is true, what happens to the EPA? Does anyone get reprimanded? Does anyone lose their job? Do those harmed get any restitution? The answer to all three is no, nothing happens. And it

wasn't that long ago our own EPA caused one of the biggest toxic dumps in history in Colorado, and again, nothing was done.

It's time federal agencies are held to the same standards that those they are supposed to serve are held to. If they break the law, those who made the decision need to be fired or at the least get a demotion. Time and time again we see an out of control bureaucracy making

decisions that hurt the public, and nothing is done. Time has come for accountability, and the EPA is a good place to start.



Lynn Ketelsen

Lynn Ketelsen is the Farm Director for Linder Farm Network.



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# Zenk finds success growing navy bean crop

By Dick Hagen  
Correspondent

For Olivia farmer and Northarvest Bean Growers Association Director Jim Zenk, the 2016 harvest was his 50th and last. His corn, soybean and hog operation even included edible beans the past 47 years.

Zenk started farming in 1966 after coming home from Air Force basic training (plus six years in the Minnesota Air Guard). "Word got around that I bought a nearly-new John Deere 4020 and two neighbors came over wanting me to rent their farms," related Zenk. Yes, some rocky, poorly drained and overpriced extra acres were available he said.

He recalls some tough times the first few years but says farming has always been exciting, even though financially painful at times.

Always curious about 'what's new,' Zenk and his dad starting raising pinto beans in 1970 after a processing plant was built at neighboring Bird Island. A few years later a new navy bean processing plant was built at Olivia, only six miles from his farm. So the Zenk's shifted to navies



Submitted photo

Northarvest Bean Growers Association Director and Olivia resident, Jim Zenk.

which Jim says are easier to grow. He's been growing navies

ever since.

"In the early days of edibles

growers were in and out. Prices weren't predictable. And harvest-

ing was an issue because we didn't have strong, 'stand up' genetics. But now the guys that grow navy beans grow them every year as part of their rotation," said Zenk. He estimates about 20 percent of area farmers are growing Navy beans. Why? Because navies have been more lucrative than corn and soybeans the last few years.

"It's a 'black ink' crop and that's the reason. Break evens are doable on navies. However because it's an edible product you have to be more careful in harvest and handling. But with that comes the reward of better profits."

Current board price at ADM, Olivia processing center is \$27/cwt. In 2016 prices ranged in the mid \$20s. Jim's son Rob is manager of the Olivia facility and said contracts would be available for the 2017 crop. "But we don't yet have contract prices. Typically growers will contract about 1 ton per acre, however 2400 to 2700 pounds per acre are common these days. We'll have plenty of seed." Edible bean seed is produced mostly in Idaho.

Zenk

Turn to page 20

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## Zenk: Navy beans proving more profitable than traditional crops at present Continued from page 19

Jim Zenk is wrapping up his 12th year as a board member of the Minnesota Dry Bean Research & Promotion Council.

"Yes, edibles have a world market. I've learned a lot about marketing and been to places and met growers from all over the continent." Travels included a food show in Germany a few years ago where he met food buyers and sellers from all over the world. "When they found out I was a U.S. farmer who grows these beans they wanted to buy directly from me. They didn't understand these beans aren't saleable directly from the farm."

About six years ago Zenk's trade mission travels took him to Colombia where people eat lots of beans similar to a pinto. "We came away empty handed, but the next team convinced the Colombian food trade people to try a few of our American edibles. And now Colombia is a major importer of U.S. pinto beans." Great Britain continues the number one export market for U.S. navy beans; Mexico is number one for pinto beans. However Bush Beans, Wisconsin is the primary purchaser of Midwest edible beans.

Zenk sees a bright future for edible beans as people look for low-cost protein sources. "Beans are high quality protein and cheaper than meat. We haven't scratched the surface on future demand for dry edible beans."

Yes, lots of changes in dry bean production today compared with the 1970s. "Back then we had a puller, a machine

### About Northarvest Bean Growers Association

Created in 1976 as a cooperative effort between dry bean growers in North Dakota and Minnesota, Northarvest Bean Growers Association (NBGA) provides a full range of services and funding to help producers and shippers supply the world with dry beans. NBGA:

- Helps fund export marketing initiatives, advertising, trade shows, public relations, and communications
- Funds research to improve the quantity, variety, and quality of dry beans grown in the region
- In 1960, the number of farmers raising dry beans in the Northarvest region could be counted in single digits. Today, we're a leading producer and shipper of dry beans for thousands of farmers.
- North Dakota, Minnesota and Michigan lead the U.S. in production of pinto, navy, dark red kidney and pink bean.
- Other classes include black, light red kidney, small red, great northern, cranberry.

Northarvest Bean Growers Association, Frazee, MN 56544. Phone: 218-334-6351 email: nhbean@loretel.net. Some content of this story was sourced from January 2017 issue, BeanGrower.

that literally pulled the plants out of the soil surface into a windrow. "It was night work to minimize cracking of the pods. It was messy work. We'd always end up with some dirty beans. Running those beans through your combine was a mess and hard on your combine too.

"But when newer varieties let us direct-cut and better flex heads became available, we could virtually shave the ground."

Two more new products made the harvest even better." We started using a new desiccant that killed the beans just a few days ahead of harvest. This greatly minimized moisture issues. Plus field rollers came on big time. Stomping root balls

into the soil greatly cleaned up the harvest."

Zenk chuckles, "Considering all the problems we had with this 'new' crop in those first years you wonder why we kept on but soybeans were about \$3 and we'd get expect only about 30 bushel yields. Pintos were 10 cents in those days and we could expect 2,200 pound. yields!"

Zenk's son Rob, has taken over the farming chores. What advice for the new kid on the block? "The more things change, the more they stay the same. The concern with our growers today is the price isn't good enough and there are always disease potentials. Those two are pretty much the same concerns we had 46

years ago."

Zenk thinks Northarvest's commitment to research and promotion is part of the reason for the evolution of production practices and improved pest and disease products. "Like every other commodity, we have a checkoff (10 cents/cwt.) Checkoff money used for research projects at NDSU, SDSU and other locations. I've been on the research committee. Deciding what particular research project we're putting our grower's check off dollars into is always interesting."

Zenk is upfront about the edible bean industry and the value of the checkoff. "Without new genetics, new products and practices over the years, I really don't think we'd be much of an industry today."

Contracts with growers used to direct pricing with the edible bean industry. Growers need to do the pencil pushing to compare relative 'break even' figures. Zenk speculates 28-30 cents would be probable prices going into the 2017 crop season.

Even though Zenk and wife Dianne have now moved into Olivia, Jim admits he'll probably be at the farm more often than needed. "I'm not much of a hunter or fisherman. I don't golf but suppose I could learn. But I'm pretty certain my son will need me once in awhile...even if it's just a trip into town for something."

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# State, business leaders talk water quality action

By Scott Tedrick  
Editor

Amidst the first quarter of the new year, Governor Mark Dayton has been championing the policy visions that will be the focus of the of his remaining time holding the state's highest elected office. During a pair of recent state-wide events, the Governor's Town Hall Water Summit and Environmental River Congress, Dayton highlighted water quality as one of his top priorities. going so far as to declare 2017 a "Year of Water Action" and calling for the emergence of a state-wide water ethic that is framed around a commitment to reach bold water quality goals that will require both innovation and collaboration to be realized.



Mark Dayton

Five-hundred attendees, plus an additional 170 participating via a satellite viewing location at University of Minnesota's St. Paul, Duluth and Crookston campuses, were a part of the on Friday, Jan. 27 Governor's Town Hall Water Summit held at the University of Minnesota Morris. There, a keynote speech by former Cargill CEO Greg Page provided those in attendance with in-depth consideration of just what the water quality ethic means for state agriculture—and how taking steps to make impactful, economical ly efficient actions are not always easy as they might seem.

## Water quality goal

By inciting an aggregate of water quality efforts, Dayton has set a "25 by '25" Water Quality Goal, which he hopes to have approved by the legislature to spur innovation and collaboration around strategies to improve Minnesota's water quality 25 percent by 2025.

"Without additional action, the quality of Minnesota's waters is expected to improve only six to eight percent by 2034," according to information from Governor's office. "If approved by the Legislature, Governor Dayton's proposed new goal would engage local governments, farmers, scientists, environmental groups, and business leaders in a collaborative effort to address Minnesota's water quality challenges."

"Without an ambitious, achievable goal, the quality of our water will continue to deteriorate," said Governor Dayton. "Minnesotans must set this goal now, and then work together to achieve it. I ask all Minnesotans to join me in finding solutions that will ensure our children and grandchildren inherit clean water to drink, swim, and fish in. This is everyone's challenge, and everyone's responsibility."

Achieving a 25 percent improvement in water quality statewide would require Minnesota to take aggressive, yet achievable action. It also would help Minnesota meet existing commitments to reduce phosphorus 12 percent by 2025 and nitrogen 45 percent by 2040 in the Mississippi River.

Governor Dayton's "25 by '25" Water Quality Goal would not add additional regulations. It is instead a call to action to drive



Governor Dayton has declared 2017 the "Year of Water Action."

public engagement and partnerships to address the state's growing water quality issues. The goal also would be flexible, allowing each of Minnesota's eight local watershed regions to decide which pollutants to address,

and strategies to employ.

Water quality

Turn to page 22



Submitted photo

500 were on site for the Governor's Water Summit at U of MN, Morris.

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# Water quality: Former Cargill CEO, Page, sounds off on quality efforts as keynote Continued from page 21

## Greg Page

For over a little over a year and half, or since the introduction of the water buffer -bill debate, former Cargill CEO, Page, has immersed himself in understanding the water quality discussion in hopes and contributing to the development of worthwhile initiatives to address the water quality problem.

Page framed his speech around the concept that addressing water quality in Minnesota means coming to face-to-face with a "wicked problem," which is to say "a problem that doesn't have any solution that is more virtuous on every dimension."

A term he picked up during his 42 years working with leaders of government and business, Page said wicked problems are the toughest to deal with because addressing one aspect of the problem may create other drawbacks for parties also tied to the issue. Thus, priorities have set to be collectively, and action taken together. Which is tough when it comes to wicked problems.

Page provided a couple examples both abstract and directly attributable to the Governor's present water quality policy and action.

In one instance, he recalled speaking to an audience in California and asking the question, "who here has switched to cage free eggs?" En masse the au-



**Greg page**

Page is the retired Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Cargill, Incorporated. He served as Executive Director of Cargill in 2015 and, 2016, as Executive Chairman from 2013 to September 2015, and as Chief Executive Officer from 2007 to 2013. He was elected to the Cargill Board of Directors in 2000 and was elected Chairman of the board in 2007.

dience raised their hands, prompting Page's follow up queries:

"For those of you raising your hand, how many have calculated the impact that decision has on your green house gas footprint?"

Amidst silence, he continued, "And what about the water footprint of that decision."

*Crickets.*

"And the impact on deforestation?"

Page explained the move cage-free increases the footprint of all these, for in-

stance doubling the amount of the green house gas output of a non-cage-free facility.

"They've made a choice [to switch to cage-free eggs] and if animal welfare is important to you, so be it and that's fine and many companies are responding to that desire. But people need to realize the second order consequence that other people hold dear are important, significant and negative..."

## No single drop responsible for the flood

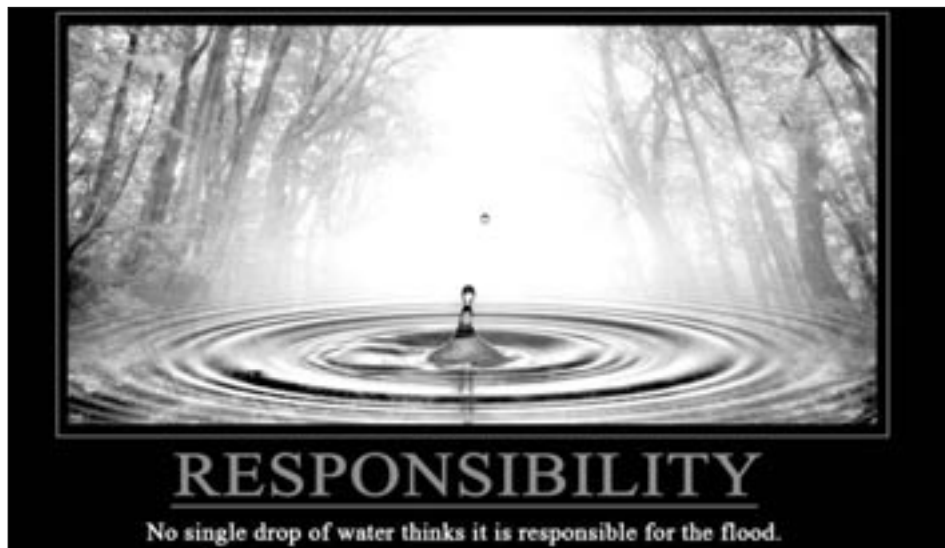
Another question preceded his second example and was directly attributable to Dayton's present policy involving the \$500 million state and federal appropriation to improve nitrate concentrations in state waters.

"I want everyone to ask themselves, if I had \$500 million to spend to address nitrates in water how would I spend it?" he said.

As it is, Dayton's plan will see the expenditure used to put 60,000 acres of low quality ag-land out of production and into conservation—an amount that constitutes one-third of one percent of the tilled land in Minnesota.

Running the numbers, Page said, "If we assume we take out the 'right land' and that land contributes nitrates at three times the rate [on average], then by doing this we would get rid of one percent of all nitrates.

"The vision is to remove



The above visual was utilized by Page during his keynote speech at the Governor's Town Hall and Water Summit held Friday, Jan. 27 at U of MN, Morris.

45 percent of all nitrates, but if this is the only tool we use then it would cost \$23 billion to reach our goal."

Both examples are somewhat sobering, illustrating the extent of the wicked problem that the state and nation must address. As such, Page said solutions will not come from discussions in which individuals hold "narrow and vehement perspectives," geared only in consideration of a single priority whether animal,

agricultural, economic, environmental or the like.

The remainder of Page's address dove-tailed with Dayton's championing of a water quality ethic, focusing on the idea that change was only to happen through creative, bold and broad-based solutions born out of discussions from the full spectrum of interests operating in the respect of priorities shared cumulatively.

And, for that, individuals as a state-wide and national

community must agree on the future people to bring into being and then have the kind of trust and respect required amongst each sector to manifest it into reality. "Every Minnesotan should feel accountable," Page said, as he stood in the foreground of a large visual of a droplet of water featuring the caption: "No rain drop takes responsibility for the flood."

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# Schjenken looks back on 37 years with beet coop

By Dick Hagen  
Correspondent

Rarely does a person have 37 years experience with one employer. Meet Mike Schjenken. He retired Feb. 7 after 37 years as a fieldman with Southern Minnesota Sugar Beet Growers (SMSBC). He smiles over memories of the past 37 years and days ahead giving him unlimited 'Grandpa Time' with his seven grandchildren.

But first some history:

In March 1971, members of the Southern Minnesota Beet Growers Association were informed they no longer had a mar-

ket for their beets. Why? The old, outdated processing facility at Chaska was shutting down. Small size, obsolescence, high cost of freighting beets, costly renovation and adding pollution controls were the reasons. In essence time had caught up with this facility.

But that didn't shut down the ambitions of beet growers. They immediately began searching for a way to build a sugar factory to be owned by the growers themselves. The obstacles and hurdles encountered seemed insurmountable at times, but perseverance prevailed.

By October 1972, the Growers Association had formed a new cooperative, a suitable site had been selected, and preliminary groundwork had been laid in pursuit of their goal - a sugar factory to serve the needs of the approximate 300 growers involved. By March 28, 1973, the newly-formed cooperative was ready for a gala ground-breaking event for a \$60 million sugar processing facility.

Construction began in earnest in May of 1973, with completion expected in time for the first harvest in the fall of 1974. However, setback after setback such as a shortage of equipment for the factory, strikes by the construction workers, and the ever elusive finalization of the financing package generated delays.

However by Spring 1975, the outlook was better. Approximately 50,000 acres of sugar beets were planted! Despite the many problems, and the not-quite-complete factory, a 3-day dedication celebration happened in July 1975. On Oct. 14, 1975, the slicing of 768,000 tons of sugar beets began!

Enter Mike Schjenken. In March, 1980 he began his 37 year career as an Agriculturist for this still very young sugar beet cooperative. Mike officially retired Feb. 7, 2017. "I feel blessed to have been a part of this co-op. God truly watched out for me and our growers. I have met many good people thru the



Submitted photo

Mike Schjenken has served as a fieldman for the Southern Minn. Sugar Beet Growers for a sum thirty-seven years.



Submitted photo

The SMBSC general office entrance.

Schjenken

Turn to page 24

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# Schjenken: hard to imagine area community without the impact of the SMBSC Continued from page 23

years. I can't imagine what this area would be without SMSBC generating extra income for our growers and employees," related Schjenken.

Credit for Mike's love of agriculture goes to his farming dad, Art Schjenken, an active farmer who also was President of the Renville County Farmers Union. Mike was 14 when his father's life was suddenly cut short in a tractor accident. Mike realized his path to farming was not to be but he wanted to work in agriculture. Education to the rescue. His Ag teacher, Gil Warriner, suggested Mike enroll in the 2-year Ag Technology course at Willmar (now Ridgewater Community College). That led to his first job at Polar Chemicals and Gas at Cosmos; next as Fertilizer and Chemical manager at his home town Sacred Heart Elevator.

Enter destiny: With the advice of SMSBC fieldman Del Paschke, Mike got an interview with Ed Tanner, at that time the sugar beet co-op's Agricultural Manager. It worked! In March, 1980, Mike became a fieldman for SMBSC. Newly married to his wife Mary, his first area was Bird Island, Hector and Buffalo Lake (north of 212). "My mentor and close friend was my fellow fieldman, Leroy Sager. He taught me a lot about being a fieldman. Mike Holien and Ken Dahl were also fieldmen at that time."

"Yes, those first couple of years were big learning experiences for me," admits



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## Souther Minn. Beet Sugar Cooperative General Office signage.

Mike. "I knew something about fertilizer and Ag chemicals. But the sugar beet is a particular plant. There's only one way to treat a sugar beet crop and that's the right way. My growers were my best teachers. Growers like Dale Rudeen, Swede Elfering, Leroy Stamer, Buford Broderius, Eugene Kramer, Allen Walter and Ray Fischer. They just took a special interest in teaching me about sugar beets. These guys were the real pros. The sugar beet was their livelihood. They just seemed to know the tendencies of this crop like it was part of their family." Each SMBSC fieldman worked with about 60 growers.

In those days raw seed and a variety of planters that spaced the seeds two to three inches apart was the process. That meant lots of migrant labor to thin down to 100-120 stand counts (nine inches apart). Some growers were still in 30-inch rows. "But a change in payments in the early 80's got most growers to switch to 22-inch rows. Chemicals we used back then were ridiculous, almost killing the beets to control weeds. My recommendations for weeds fried many a beet crop. Yes growers were upset.

"A good crop was 18-20 ton with 15.5 to 16 percent sugar. I recall 54,000 acres

were planted in 1982 after a disastrous 1981 crop mainly due to Cercospora (a deadly fungus disease). End result that year was 13 tons and 13 percent sugar. Stock was selling for as little as \$20; some even given away. But we rebounded in 1982."

Harvest was the big rush for SMBSC fieldmen. Mike had piling sites at Bird Island and Redwood Falls. He hired the crews and managed the sites on a 24-hour call basis. "Back then we didn't do 12 hours on and 12 hours off. My veteran site crews and Leroy carried me that first year. Hard to believe now but tandem trucks did all the hauling...very few semis were on the scene in those days. We had two mechanics with Hilb Eitel heading up the 24-hour crews. We fieldmen made small repairs as we could and carried some parts."

However change was coming on fast... with better machinery, chemicals and seeds. Pattern tiling was catching on. And the introduction of Poast from BASF made grass control a thing of the past. Plus growers started stretching their rotations...beets every three years on the same ground. "Yields and sugars were increasing with these better agronomic practices," noted Mike.

## Schjenken

Turn to page 25

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# Schjenken: Early 90s saw SMBSC increase in size, eclipsing 100,000 acres Continued from page 24

He recalls a few huge weather challenges too. In the mid 80's relentless rains from Gulf area hurricanes slowed harvest. "Then a foot of snow when we were only 30 percent harvested simply shut us down. I thought the crop was history as I drove through snow banks to get to our pilers. Events like that I'm certain generated lots of prayers. The Lord must have been listening. The weather cleared and fields dried so we could get going on Oct. 21. We got the entire crop harvested by Nov. 4!

In 1985 the co-op went up to 60,000 acres and also started a research department headed by Mark Law. Mike helped in research when he could. In 1988 Ken Dahl was promoted to Ag Superintendent and 70,000 acres were planted. Good things kept happening. The co-op increased to 100,000 acres in 1991-92 and fieldmen Les Plumley and Mark Bloomquist were hired.

"Having good crews and foremen at my piling sites really make harvest more livable. We enlarged with two new piling locations at Clara City West and Maynard. By 1994 the coop was planting about 40 percent pellets instead of raw seed. That made for better spacing and the advantages were obvious when it came to topping and lifting. Tachigaren fungicide came in somewhere in this time frame and



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Turn to page 26

The general office of the Southern Minnesota Sugar Beet Cooperative located in Renville.

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23

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