

FFWMD Recognizes School, Local Farmers Optimistic... Fish And Game Club



President of the Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club Mick Siems (left) accepts one of two Conservation Partner of the Year awards from Manager Neil Powers, Fergus Falls Wetland Management District.

By: Neil Powers

We at the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District, operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, recently honored the Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club and the Fergus Falls Public Schools with our second annual Conservation Partner of the Year award.

The award celebrates individual and organizational efforts in promoting and providing conservation through effective partnership efforts with the district. Recipients must have made significant and visible contributions to conservation within the district's five county jurisdiction in western Minnesota (Otter Tail, Wilken, Wadena, Grant, and Douglas).

"We have the amazing benefit of working with many dedicated partners and individuals that help us on a recurring basis to accomplish conservation priorities," stated District Manager Neil Powers. "We are shining the spotlight on the Fish and Game Club and the Fergus Falls School District for their steadfast participation in conservation efforts in 2020 while also cultivating positive relationships with our partners."

Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club made significant contributions to conservation over the course of their 100-year history. In 2020, they again made a huge impact in the surrounding area.

"The club stepped up to a challenging land acquisition that will round out Prairie Wetlands Learning Center acreage to Interstate 94 opening up immense new opportunity for public outreach and education about the prairie pothole landscape and its importance to wildlife," announced Wildlife

from helping restore prairie and wetlands, developing environmental curriculum and outdoor musical performances to visiting the center annually, seasonally, monthly, and daily, depending upon the grade level.

Visitor Services Manager Joanne Ryan stated, "The administrators, teachers, and support staff of the Fergus Falls School District have been unflagging in their dedication to the education and conservation concepts supporting the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. The benefits of field-based education are likely to affect decision-making and actions throughout students' lives and also provide the U.S. Fish and Service with a valuable vehicle to meet its mission."

"This meaningful partnership created increasing demand for environmental education services, shaping who are and how we operate, impacting thousands of students annually," added Instructional Systems Specialist Molly Stoddard. "The school district's willingness to manage complicated logistics and support daily outdoor learning in the Prairie Science Class led to the development of an innovative approach to teaching shared with colleagues throughout the state, Midwest, and country."

The school district and Prairie Wetlands Learning Center have completed many projects over the years and to this day. For example, they jointly host the annual Summer Explorers Biology Camp and Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom Workshop.

They raised over 37,600 native prairie and wetland plants spouted in the greenhouse and planted them in the prairie, some with elders at the Mill Street Residence. Students compete and place in the Jr. Duck Stamp art contest and the Jr. and Sr. Environments. They also hosted two Governors Deer Opener events, formed the Junior Friends of the Prairie Wetlands, and created on-line outdoor learning experiences for students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"ISD 544 employees bring innovation, passion, and a growing exuberance for nature to the table, and they share that with us and others. We are so at ease with them. Our relationship is meaningful and special beyond any others we enjoy," stated Environmental Education Specialist Teresa Jaskiewicz.

Learn more about the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District which is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 150-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 567 National Wildlife Refuges and 38 Wetland Management Districts. It also operates 68 National Fish Hatcheries and 81 ecological services field stations.



Superintendent Jeff Drake of the Fergus Falls Public Schools accepts one of t20 Conservation Partner of the Year awards from Manager Neil Powers, Fergus Falls Wetland Management District on the deck of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center surrounded by members of both staffs.

From left to right: Stanley Mickens, Scott Colbeck, Tindy Rund, Jeff Drake, Neil Powers, Jon Steinbrenner, Molly Stoddard, Jo Fritz, Dean Monke, Teresa Jaskiewicz, and Justin Heersink.

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year would be welcomed about now.

This year, for the first time in at least a half dozen planting seasons, there is reason to be optimistic. The primary reason for that optimism is the price being offered for crops. Both spot markets now and well out into the futures market are pretty good. They're a long ways off the highs of 2012 but much better than they have been for the past five years.

Corn and soybeans, the two main driving forces in the local markets, have both shown considerable strength since the beginning of the year. The strength in those two markets has dragged wheat up right along with the other two commodities.

At harvest last fall, realizing \$3 per bushel for corn was a problem. Since that time there has been some real strength exhibited in that market. Corn is now bringing between \$5.15 and \$5.25 per bushel on the spot markets at elevators. That price would drop off by about a buck a bushel if you were inclined to forward contract new crop corn for delivery next November.

Soybeans have been a tricky crop to put a number on for the past couple of years. During that time the board price at the elevators was showing something in the \$11 per bushel range. But there was a government subsidy that could be applied for due to the federal government blowing up the Chinese soybean market for traders.

Today a bushel of soybeans is worth about \$13.50 per bushel if you had any to sell. That price holds pretty steady until harvest in the fall of 2021 when the new crop price for beans dips down to about \$12 per bushel. How much the government will be participating to strengthen that market is something you will have to take up with the ASCS office.

As far as wheat is concerned, that small grain is trading within a few pennies of \$6 per bushel as far out as the boards extend. Wheat suffers from an inferiority complex because nobody wants to grow it anymore.

Turkey Farmers To Host Technology Sessions

The Minnesota Turkey Growers Association (MTGA) is excited to host meetings across the state focused on technology in the Minnesota turkey industry. The sessions for MTGA members will take place in Detroit Lakes, Paynesville, and Marshall on March 23, 24, and 25th respectively. All MTGA members and their farm employees are invited to attend.

"From the barn to the lab, it's amazing how many innovations are out there to make farming easier and improve the welfare of flocks," said Paul Kvistad, turkey farmer and MTGA President.

The event will feature speakers from three innovators - Turkey Trac, Transport Genie, and General Probiotics. Turkey Trac was developed by a fifth-generation turkey farmer and is software aimed to track flock performance and improve the grower's bottom line. Transport Genie offers technology that records microclimate conditions of poultry during transport and improves overall bird welfare. General Probiotics utilizes antimicrobial probiotics for use in poultry feed or water.

"STEM is everywhere throughout the Minnesota turkey industry. The early adoption of advancements explains why our state is the number one producer of turkeys in the nation," said Sarah Anderson, MTGA Executive Director.

All meetings are from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and will include lunch. The meeting dates and locations are below:

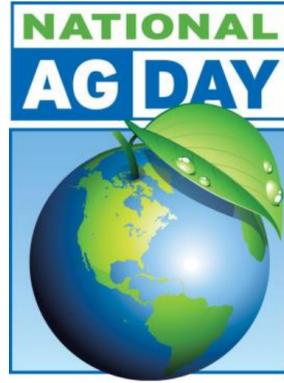
March 23 - Spitfire Grill, Detroit Lakes (1100 N Shore Dr, Detroit Lakes)

March 24 - American Legion, Paynesville (770 Diekmann Dr, Paynesville)

March 25 - Wooden Nickel, Marshall (448 W Main St, Marshall)

Due to COVID safety measures, space is limited. MTGA members are encouraged to reserve their meeting seats early. Members can RSVP with their desired location to the MTGA office at 763 682-2171 or info@minnesotaturkey.com. Meeting materials will be provided at each location.

MTGA is a trade association representing over 450 turkey farmers across the state. Many of our growers come from multi-generational family farms. Our organization also represents turkey processors and other industry stakeholders. Together, we advocate for the interests of the Minnesota turkey farmer and industry as a whole.



That crop and all small grains in general simply do not pencil out during crop planning.

Planning is where most local farmers are right now. Land rentals and sales have already been handled. There has been a visit to the local financial institution to assure input cost funds are available. Now it's just a matter of getting a crop in the ground and waiting for it to grow with a good deal of tender loving care along the way between now and harvest.

Those with sugarbeet acres already know how many acres will be devoted to that crop. Corn is the crop of choice for many growers as that commodity has taken over many if not most fields over the past couple of decades. A 200-bushel to

the acre corn crop is not out of the realm of possibility for growers with good land. That kind of yield has made corn king around here.

The second most favored crop is soybeans. Beans can be seeded late and harvested early. They do not require a lot of fertilizer. The downside for soybeans is getting their feet wet. Beans do not do well in wet soils. The moisture conditions dictate the difference between a 50-bushel to the acre crop and a 5-bushel to the acre crop.

Corn, soybeans, sugarbeets and wheat, probably in that order will be what is planted in local fields this spring. Three of those four crops may be shuffled around at the last minute depending upon whether tractors are in the fields early or late in April.

In most cases, farmers expect to be in their fields with early crops in mid-April to early May. Soybeans will go into the ground a week or so before the end of May in most years, earlier if the soil is warm enough. If it gets too late into the spring for planting "traditional" crops, sunflowers or some other "wild card" crop might be seeded.

Details and plans for most farmers are subject to change right up until seeds are put in the ground. After that it's a matter of timely spraying and hoping for rain showers to move through on a regular, as-needed basis.

It's Time To Start Seeding

By: Mary H. Meyer, Extension Horticulturist

Spring is just around the corner and now is the time to start seeds indoors, especially if you want a specific kind of tomato, pepper or impatiens flowers for your garden. Some seeds grow slowly and others are quite rapid to germinate.

How do you know when to start which kind of seed?

Read the information on the seed packet for when to start the seed indoors. If the packet says sow directly outdoors and gives no info on starting seed indoors, those seeds grow quickly outdoors and likely do not need a head start indoors.

Minnesota's spring last frost date typically happens between May 10 and 31, depending on where you live.

Weather records from 1991 through 2010 show a 10 percent probability of 32°F as of May 10 in the Twin Cities.

The last frost date is a guideline for moving your seedlings outdoors. Suggested starting dates for popular vegetables and flowers:

Two bees on white flowers of spicy globe Greek basil (*Ocimum basilicum* 'Minimum') with pink and purple petunias in the background.

Late February or early March:
Impatiens • Petunias • Leeks • Onions

Early to mid-March:
Cabbage • Broccoli • Cauliflower
Mid-March:
Eggplant • Okra • Peppers

Early April:
Tomatoes • Kale • Leaf lettuce

Mid to late April:
Squash • Melons • Cucumbers
Leeks, onions, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale and leaf lettuce can be planted out before the last frost date because, unlike the other crops listed above, these cool season vegetables can tolerate cooler soils and temperatures.

Johnny's Seed Starting Calculator allows you to enter your frost-free date and, with a click of a button, will calculate the starting date for a long list of flowers and vegetable seed. When to sow the seed, and when to move plants outside is customized based on the frost date entered.

Check out starting seeds indoors for more complete information on light, containers, soil and temperatures for seed starting.

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