



WATERSHED
ASSISTANCE
THROUGH
EDUCATION &
RESOURCES

HERON LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT

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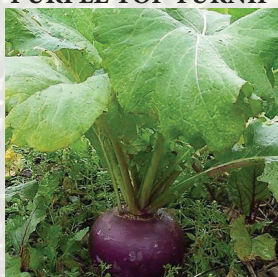
Water Watch

October 2012

Cover Crop Demonstration Project

In an effort to protect southwest Minnesota's essential water resources the Heron Lake Watershed District (HLWD), in partnership with Jerry and Nancy Ackermann and Extended Ag Services, Inc., applied for a grant from the North Central Region – Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Farmer Rancher program. Through this program, a 37-acre cover crop demonstration site was established.

PURPLE TOP TURNIP



The cover crop demonstration site is directly adjacent to Jackson County Judicial Ditch 3 located in Section 33 of West Heron Lake Township in Jackson County. Cereal rye, tillage radish, and purple top turnip were seeded to address water quality problems by increasing nutrient uptake, reducing erosion, and minimizing nutrient leaching. The cover crop will directly benefit the community and watershed by slowing water and reducing sediment and nutrient runoff before it enters the ditch.

TILLAGE RADISH



CEREAL RYE



The root systems of the cover crop will break up compaction to allow for better water infiltration and be used to draw nitrogen from deep below the surface back to the root zone for next year's crop. This seed mix will scavenge nitrogen to enhance soil fertility, add additional organic matter to improve soil composition, increase infiltration, diminish soil movement, and reduce weed competition. All of these are ways to naturally improve the overall yield of the following year's crop



while reducing nitrogen application costs.

The HLWD was awarded \$6,642.26 from NCR-SARE to establish the demonstration site and seed for the 2012 growing season. The plot was aerially seeded by helicopter into standing soybeans and corn on August 26, 2012.

This demonstration project will build upon previous work done through different grant foundations including NCR-SARE. Our project results will allow farmers within the HLWD and southwest Minnesota to gain knowledge and understanding of cover



crops and their ability to be used locally. Data will show farmers that cover crops are a useful management tool for their own farm's sustainability.



Field Day

A field day will be hosted by the HLWD to provide an opportunity for interested farmers and agricultural professionals to learn about this cover crop demonstration project. The event will take place Wednesday, November 7, 1:00 p.m., at the Jerry and Nancy Ackermann Farm Site (SE¼ of Section 33, West Heron Lake Township, Jackson County); five miles west of Lakefield on County Road 14.

If you are interested in attending, please register with the HLWD office by Thursday, November 1 at 507-793-2462 or contact Jan Voit at jan.voit@mysmbs.com.

Guest speaker Jill Sackett is a local extension educator and conservation agronomist for the Uni-



Jill Sackett

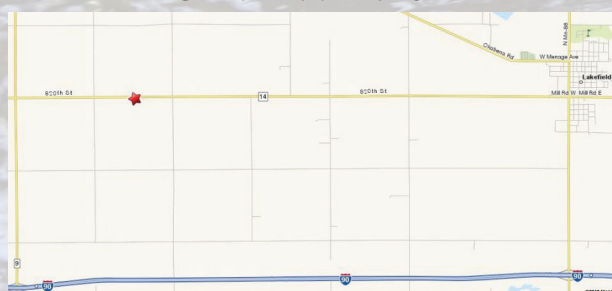
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Field Day continued

versity of Minnesota Extension–Rural Advantage. This position is grant funded by the non-profit Rural Advantage and the watershed organization the Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance (GBERBA). Sackett has been working on a cover crop grant funded by NCR-SARE since 2009. This three-year grant was received by Practical Farmers of Iowa and Rural Advantage in the fall of that year and will run through fall 2012. Sackett's programming is driven by water quality and the conservation agronomy mindset. Programming includes third crops, cover crops, and bioenergy feedstocks. Major program events include the Third Crop Producer Meetings, Third Crop Walk-n-Talks, and cover crop workshops and field days.

ACKERMANN FARM SITE



WHAT'S Happening?

- Cover Crop Demonstration Plot Field Day: Wednesday, November 7 at 1:00 p.m.
- HLWD Board meeting: Tuesday, November 20, 2012, at 7:00 p.m.

Note: HLWD meeting dates and times are tentative.
Please contact the HLWD office
for the exact date and time.

Contact us with your questions or concerns; call 507-793-2462 or email jan.voit@mysmbs.com.

Funding for this newsletter was provided by NCR-SARE through the Farmer Rancher Grant Program.